PREVIEW INTERVIEWS: ARION, SUPERGIRL, BLACKHAWK

NMP

NUMBER 19

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SEPTEMBER NUMBER 19

THE ART OF WALLY WOOD

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STAFF

HAL SCHUSTER
publisher
RICHARD HOWELL
editor emeritus
ROBERT LEWIS
editor
KURT BUSIEK
New York correspondent
JACK SCHUSTER
president
ROBERT LEWIS
production manager
WENDY MEYER
production assistant
GWEN TAYLOR
typesetter

CONTRIBUTORS

Robert Anderson
Kurt Busiek
Richard Howell
Carol Kalish
David Kirk
Jim Korkis
Robert Lewis
Rick Norwood
Margaret O'Connell
Peter Sanderson
Chuck Wooley

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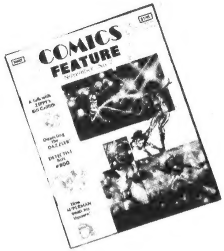

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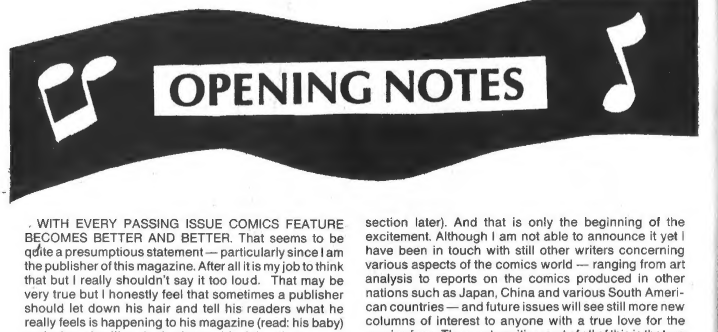

WITH EVERY PASSING ISSUE COMICS FEATURE BECOMES BETTER AND BETTER. That seems to be quite a presumptious statement — particularly since I am the publisher of this magazine. After all it is my job to think that but I really shouldn't say it too loud. That may be very true but I honestly feel that sometimes a publisher should let down his hair and tell his readers what he really feels is happening to his magazine (read: his baby) and where it will go in the future. I feel that the present time when I am taking a more active hand than previously and working very closely with my new editor (as well as intimately with a whole string of writers and friends) is the best time for such honesty. Previously I lived and worked almost a full continent away from where Comics Feature was actually produced and even though I did have a fair amount of input into the publishing and creative process it just cannot compare to living with the magazine, breathing in the scent of the galleys, and carrying the final package off to be mailed to the printer. I am excited and I hope that it shows in the magazine.

We have been taking major steps in improving every aspect of the contents. With the tremendous help of our previous staff we have been left in the ideal position of having much of the material for the current issues on hand, typeset, and in many cases even laid out in final, camera-ready form. We have the time to closely look at the magazine from page one until the last page of the issue and decide what we like, what we don't like, what we want to change and what will remain the same. And we have the time to both finish off the package and actually take steps to bring about those changes. Last issue you were rewarded with some of those efforts. For the first time were able to read columns by Jim Korkis and Rick Norwood, two of the best commentators on the current comics, animation and newspaper strips scene writing anywhere. Jim also began to send us news on what was breaking in the animation field so that these could be included in the news section. This issue Rick has begun to grace our offices and your news section with items of interest about the world of newspaper comic strip syndication. This issue both these gentlemen have contributed to making this the biggest and best Comic Feature news section ever (more on the news section later). And that is only the beginning of the excitement. Although I am not able to announce it yet I have been in touch with still other writers concerning various aspects of the comics world — ranging from art analysis to reports on the comics produced in other nations such as Japan, China and various South American countries — and future issues will see still more new columns of interest to anyone with a true love for the comics form. The most exciting part of all of this is that we are able to add these new features without taking away any of the material which previously found a home in this magazine. We have simply added more pages!!

Up above I promised that there would be more information on the Comics Feature news section. Well, here it is. And I truly hope that you are sitting down because it is a long story. First I will have to explain my position on the gathering of news and the reporting of it. I come from a very old fashioned school of journalism and sincerely believe that it is the job of the news publication to provide a service to its readers and to the news sources which it covers. It is the job of such a publication to inform the reader accurately and completely when an event occurs which will be of interest; it is the job of such a publication to act as a conduit to transmit the information which a news source needs to have flow to those who have an interest in what that news source is doing. While it is definitely not the job of the news publication to take everything it is told as gospel it is also not its job to establish a needless antagonistic relationship with its sources or to make public information which it is given in confidence under an agreement not to make that item public until the proper time when the whole story can be told accurately. Not censorship but professional standards. And the publication which does not follow these standards risks having its sources dry up, risks having to apologize for wrong and inaccurate reporting, and ultimately does a disservice to its readers. We here at Comics Feature will always report a story completely, factually and with the positions of all involved parties clearly presented. We do not feel it is our job to pick sides and we do not have an ax to grind. If this means that we do not always have the first report on every news story that breaks that is the price we pay. We will always have the

complete story, the story with all of the pertinent details, the story that you can trust to be accurate. We report more than just the headlines — we report the full story.

With that in mind we have changed the name of our news section. While we will continue to follow the position we always have we have come to feel that our name may be slightly misleading. From now on the news section of Comics Feature will be called Feature News. We will continue to present the most complete news section anywhere, a news section not just devoted to presenting the world of Marvel and DC but of all of the publishers of comic books and related material as well as the worlds of animation and comic strips. When appropriate we will also present mini-interviews with the people making the news. For example, in this issue we present an interview with Mark Evanier in which he discusses his new Blackhawk book for DC and explains his plans for that title. This will be followed by other mini-interviews which will appear in the news section of this magazine and which will present the plans of the writers, editors, and artists who are launching new titles or revivals of older books, or who are planning a new direction for a title (but only when a major change of direction is about to take place), or who are simply involved in doing something which will have a major impact on the books which you buy each month. To accomplish this we have expanded the Comics Feature news team so that the Feature News section will now have three regular contributors. We have added a staff member whose sole job for us is to prepare Feature News (and to conduct interviews for Comics Feature). This individual has a firm background both in comics and in writing and will combine both of these skills to our benefit. Kurt Busiek has been contributing pieces to all of the NMP titles on a freelance basis for quite some time, holds a degree in creative writing from the University of Syracuse, and is a freelance writer for both Marvel and DC. Kurt will be responsible for the overall feel of Feature News, will write the major news stories in the section, conduct most of the mini-interviews and gather all of the pertinent data. His news stories will not be superficial reports or one-sided presentations but carefully crafted reports prepared only after speaking to all of the people involved in an event. Also serving on the staff of the news section are Jim Korkis and Rick Norwood both of whom enjoy the greatest prestige as being among the best in their respective areas of interest. With this three-man team preparing Feature News I think that we are in for both an exciting and an informative time.

With all of the new columns and series, the interviews we have lined up (Perez and Schaffenberger this issue, Brent Anderson and Sol Harrison next issue), and Feature News is it any wonder that I feel that we have the best magazine possible and that I am as excited as a little kid in a candy shop to be here and doing what I am doing?

(NEXT ISSUE: The return of the editor to the editorial as Bob Lewis introduces himself to doing this column on a regular basis and tells you what he's think about.)

How did that happen? It really doesn't matter how or why. And, on the front cover, too! It's bad enough to misspell a word, but a **name** - and the name of the person who was the subject of the feature interview! I offer no excuses. I do offer an apology.
Mr. Collins; we **can** spell **Max Allan Collins,** and I hope that we will have an opportunity in the near future to prove it.

Robert Lewis
Editor

FEATURE NEWS

New Chicago-Based Comic Book Company Enters Field

Within a year of the California based **Pacific Comics** entry into the field, still another publisher of four color comic books has entered the market. **First Comics, Inc.,** also based outside of the closed circle of New York City publishing, enters the field with the ambitious plan of launching seven monthly titles within their first year of operation, with development underway for two additional titles. The first three titles to be announced by the new company are: **E-MAN, SABLE,** and **WARP.**

Mike Gold, formerly director of public relations for **DC Comics,** is the President of the new company, while Rick Obadiah serves as the Publisher, and Joe Staton has been appointed Art Director.

WARP is based on the trilogy of science fiction plays by Stuart Gordon and Bury St. Edmund. The series will begin a nine-part adaptation of the original story and then will continue with further adventures of the WARP heroes. **Warp** is the story of David Carson, the young man who must sacrifice his name and his love in order to become Lord Cumulus, and enter upon a quest in the mystical land of Fen-Ra where a beautiful warrior and an ancient wizard advise him that the fate of the universe lies in his hands. Life as a bank teller probably did not prepare him for this magical mission. The art is by Frank Brunner. The story was originally presented as a series of three plays at the Organic Theater in Chicago in 1971 and utilized costumes and sets designed by Neal Adams.

The second title scheduled for release by **First Comics** is **E-MAN.** Like **Warp,** the origins of E-Man precede the creation of **First Comics** by several years. Created by comics artist Joe Staton and writer Nick Cuti for **Charlton Comics** in 1972, E-Man is sentient energy in human form. The book became the most popular Charlton comic within a very short period of time and continued publication until 1975 when it was terminated, along with most of the Charlton comic line. **First Comics** has purchased all rights to E-Man on behalf of the creators.

The third title to be announced features the work of Mike Grell. Mike Grell, the creator, writer, and at one time artist of **Warlord** for **DC Comics,** has rapidly become one of the most popular comic creators extant. He was chosen to launch one of the two initial releases of **Pacific Comics, Starslayer,** the other being Jack Kirby's **Captain Victory.** Now First Comics has announced that he will be creating, writing, and drawing a new title on their schedule. **Sable** is Jon Moses Sable, a contemporary urban mercenary. The initial story line involves a hired assasin's attempts to destroy the President of the United States and the government's retaliation by calling their own manhunter, Sable.

All three of the First Comics' books will be printed in standard 32 page, four color format and released on a monthly schedule. **Warp** will begin in November, while

E-Man follows in December, and **Sable** begins release in February, 1983. All titles will be sold through the direct market only, thereby following in the footsteps of such publishers as **Marvel, DC, Pacific, Eclipse, New Media,** and various others.

A closer look at the staff of this fledgling company would seem to be in order. **Mike Gold,** The President and Managing Editor of First Comics, brings an extensive background in the comics and communications field. Gold is the co-founder of the Chicago Comicon Comic Art Convention, for which he acts as program consultant, one of the largest in the country. From 1976 until 1978 he served as Public Relations Director for **DC Comics.** In 1978 he returned to Chicago and established his own consulting firm. He is acknowledged as an expert witness in the Federal District Court of New York on such issues as comic conventions, fantasy publications, and the direct sales market. At First Comics, Gold is responsible for the company's editorial product, with duties ranging from the acquisition of new properties for publication to the hiring of artists, writers, and other talent.

Rick Obadiah serves as First comics' Publisher and Corporate Secretary. He has served as Creative Director for the New York advertising agencies JSA Advertising, Knudsen-Moore, and Muller Jordan Herrick, where he was responsible for such accounts as Maserati Automobiles, Marx Toys, Ballantine Scotch, El Al Israel Airlines, and Ralston Purina's Meow Mix. He has won an Emmy for Bleacher Bums and served as Managing Director of the Organic Theater Company. Obadiah has been published by such varied publications as the National Public Radio, New York Business Review, and Advertising Age. He will be reponsible for marketing the company and its products.

Joe Staton is perhaps the best known to comic book fans of the staff employed by First Comics. Staton has attended the School of Art at Murray State University and did post-graduate work in art history at Hunter College. Staton has drawn nearly 400 comic books including work for such titles as **The Incredible Hulk, The Avengers, Superman, Batman, Legion of Superheroes,** and **The Green Lantern.** He is also the co-creator of **The Huntress** and **The Omega Men.** He will supervise all artistic endeavors at First Comics.

Other staffers of First Comics include Business Manager and Treasurer **Richard Felber** and Associate Editor **Richard Oliver.** Felber, a graduate of Bradley University, has served as the Vice President of Operations, in charge of production, contract negotiations, maintenance, safety, and insurance and inspections, for American Metal Decorators, a privatley held, multi-million dollar metal lithography company, and as President of the Brewster Condominium Association. Oliver is a marketing statistician and free-lance writer.

When gauging the seriousness of a publishing venture, particularly one of these proportions, the background of the staff becomes critical. Judging by the caliber of the personell involved, we may be looking at the birth of the first major threat to the market supremacy of Marvel and DC.

SALICRUP LEAVES MARVEL, EDITORIAL SHUFFLING BEGINS AGAIN

Editorial re-shufflings are going on at Marvel — Jim Salicrup has left Marvel as of early June. Salicrup was editor of **The Fantastic Four**, **Marvel Two-In-One**, the Marvel adaptations of **Annie** and **Blade Runner**, and others, and his departure leaves a hole in the Marvel editorial structure. Initially, Salicrup's Assistant Editor, Lance Tooks, has been assigned to Tom DeFalco, in addition to his regular assistant, Linda Grant, and Larry Hama, former editor of the now-defunct **Crazy**, has taken over the **Conan** titles. In later actions Marvel also has assigned **The Fantastic Four** and **Marvel Two-In-One** to DeFalco while Louise Jones inherits both of the George Lucas titles **Star Wars** and **Indiana Jones**. It is not yet clear what Larry Hama's new responsiblities will be.

Jim Shooter stated that "Marvel and Salicrup reached a mutual agreement that he should move on." Salicrup was unavailable for comment at press time.

Feature News Preview

PAUL KUPPERBERG
WRITING ARION AND THE NEW SUPERGIRL

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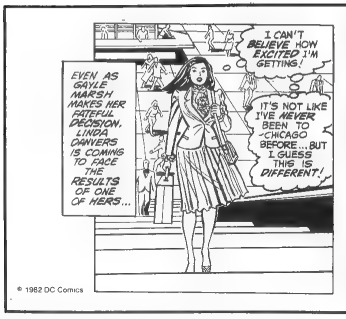
A month after the appearance of the new **BLACKHAWK** series, **DC** will premiere two more new series, both of these written by Paul Kupperberg. **COMICS FEATURE** contacted Kupperberg to get an insider's preview of **ARION, LORD OF ATLANTIS** and **THE DARING NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERGIRL**.

The "new" part of Supergirl's "daring new adventures" is easy to spot, although it might more readily be described as old — because, in order to gain new readers, the Supergirl series has taken a large step backwards. "We've taken everything that's been used in the past few years of **SUPERGIRL**, and chucked it," explains Kupperberg. It was felt that Supergirl was too old at 24 (her age in the soon-to-end SUPERMAN FAMILY) to be called a girl, and since the name couldn't change, due to merchandising, easy character identification, and so forth — the age was what had to go.

The new Supergirl is a college student, attending Lakeshore University, a fictional Ivy League college set in Chicago. The first few issues will introduce the new setting, establishing Linda's new apartment, and various collegiate hangouts, as well as a whole new set of supporting characters. Much of the series will be set in real places in Chicago. Linda Danvers lives in a real neighborhood, albeit in a fictional building, and many of the fights Supergirl gets into will take place in recognizable locations.

As far as the established continuity of the character goes, a lot of it has been thrown into the realm of "it never happened." Linda's career as a soap opera actress will never be mentioned again, and other parts of her history, like her student advisor position and her previous college attendance, has been thrown into doubt. Kupperberg says that the attitude these changes will be treated with is as follows: "If we don't mention it long enough — they'll forget about it." Longtime Supergirl fans will be relieved to learn that the character's history up until Superman revealed her existence to the world at large is still firm. "She still came from Argo City, she still was at Midvale Orphanage, and she was still adopted by the Danvers," says Kupperberg. Other longtime aspects of the series will stay, like the seies' humor content. "As in everything I write," says Kupperberg, "there'll be funny stuff. I can't see that not happening." Some of the series' more oddball elements, which disappeared when Supergirl became sleek and sophisticated for the seventies, will stay gone. Streaky the Supercat is gone for good, according to Kupperberg. "Oh, I may introduce a cat in Linda's apartment that she calls Streaky, but it won't be the super-powered one that thinks."

Supergirl's character, too, is in for some redefinition.


I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW EXCITED I'M GETTING!
EVEN AS GAYLE MARSH MAKES HER FATEFUL DECISION, LINDA DANVERS IS COMING TO FACE THE RESULTS OF ONE OF HERS...
IT'S NOT LIKE I'VE NEVER BEEN TO CHICAGO BEFORE...BUT I GUESS THIS IS DIFFERENT!
© 1982 DC Comics

"I'm trying to make her a lot different from Superman," says Kupperberg. He wants to draw a distinction between the strait-laced, rigidly self-controlled Superman, and the looser, more emotional Supergirl. "She's more likely to get incredibly pissed off and go on a rampage," and in fact, she does just that in the second issue, losing control and severly battering a villainess, once she's broken the villainess's psychic hold on her.

Supergirl will also steer clear of one of the other integral parts of the Superman character, in an effort to drive home the fact that "this is not Superman in hot pants" —there is no clear difference in personalities between Supergirl and Linda Danvers, as there is between Superman and Clark Kent. "She doesn't change character — it's the same person," says Kupperberg, adding that Supergirl will be "more wise-cracking than Superman, in a Peter Parker mold." In both her identities, the character will get involved in romantic entanglements. The first few issues will introduce a clownish student who is attracted to Linda, and another student that Linda likes, but "who doesn't know she exists." Supergirl will be meeting some interesting men, too, "because why should Linda have all the fun?"

As far as the action end of the series goes, Kupperberg intends to introduce "a new set of bad guys — all her own." He wants to make the series stand on its own, apart from ACTION and SUPERMAN and the other Kryptonian titles, and part of that is establishing a rogue's gallery

I THINK I'LL PASS, THANKS!
NOW AS I WAS TRYING TO SAY, I'M HERE TO REGISTER. MY NAME'S LINDA DANVERS AND...
PLEASED TO MEET'CHA, LINDA. I'M JOAN RAYMOND. NEW IN THESE PARTS, ARE YOU?

YEAH... BUT GETTING LESS SO BY THE SECOND. WHAT'S A GIRL GOTTA DO TO REGISTER AROUND HERE?
TRY ASKING ME, LIN.! I KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT STUFF.
-GROAN!- I'VE GOT TO BE AT THE HOUSING OFFICE IN TEN MINUTES AND YOU'RE TAKING A GIGGLE-BREAK AT MY EXPENSE!
© 1982 DC Comics

peculiar to the Supergirl series. The first couple of villains will be "Psi," a female mutant psychic with formidable mental powers, who is being manipulated by a "Svengali type," who will later metamorphose into "Decay," a villain who rots things by touching them. Other super-characters who will be making appearances in the series will be Power Girl, Supergirl's Earth-2 counterpart, and Kupperberg's creation, The New Doom Patrol.

Kupperberg describes the art, by Carmine Infantino and Bob Oksner, as "beautiful." Infantino is doing "slightly different stuff than you might expect," and Oksner "can't be beat for drawing attractive women, so his inks are just great." The combination yields art "a little softer" than what Infantino is delivering on THE FLASH, and many people in the DC offices are very enthusiastic about it. Supergirl is also sharing Lois Lane's fashion consultant, to give her clothing an imaginative, authentic touch. "I'll be different from Lois' because Linda's a college student,

and younger," explains Kupperberg. Supergirl will also be getting a new costume, after the first few issues.

ARION, LORD OF ATLANTIS, is a fantasy series, currently appearing in the back of **WARLORD**. It is set 5,000 years ago, as the world-wide nation/empire of Atlantis is facing an ice age. "The thing is," says scripter Kupperberg, "nothing like this has ever happened before. Everything used to be governed by Atlantis. If they wanted rain, they'd just say "Rain would be nice . . ." and one of the magicians would make it rain. But something is wrong with the magic energy, and they can't stop the ice. What it is is that science is coming in, and replacing magic." In this world, magic has been the force that kept the planets in orbit, the seasons changing, and the universe together, and all of this magic is fading, to be replaced by gravity, and other natural scientific processes, and the result is that the magic in the world is slowly and sporadically disappearing.

The lead player in this drama is Arion, one of the Lords who govern Atlantis, who is also a powerful mage. He is investigating the sorcery's disappearance, along with the Captain of the Atlantean Guard, Shian, and her Lieutenant, Wyynd. So far, in the **WARLORD** series, not much of real importance to the series has gone on beyond setting the stage, because Kupperberg "was waiting to see if it would be made into its own book." Arion has discovered his missing mentor, Caculha, and learned that he himself is not properly human, but a creation of magical energy. The series has also introduced concepts like The Balance, which guards the fragile balance between Chaos and Order — all three of which are physical characters in this reality.

ARION, LORD OF ATLANTIS #1 wraps up the continuity begun in **WARLORD**, so Kupperberg can "get the major plotlines started." Atlantis will be on the verge of civil war, because the citizens under Atlantis' protection feel that by not stopping the ice age, the government is cheating them, not to mention letting them die. In the midst of this shaky political climate, Arion and friends take off on a quest, which will take quite a number of issues to run through. Arion will be in search of twelve crystals, which are zodiac-based, scattered around the world. Once assembled, they can be used to work a magic spell that may save the world from encroaching science. This quest is not going to be "one crystal an issue," moving smoothly through twelve similar "and boring" issues of ARION, according to Kupperberg. "The quest'll take as long as it takes." The characters may get drawn off into other pursuits, as they go along, and the quest is being introduced less to collect these Zodiac crystals than as a chance to introduce the world of 43,000 B.C. Kupperberg intends to "create a consistent world, but I'm not relying on anyone else's interpretation." The civilization of Atlantis, for example, is a worldwide one, and the city/state of Mu, which some legends hold is a separate civilization on a separate lost continent in the Pacific (like Lemuria in the Indian Ocean), is here just a part of the Atlantean Empire. "It's fun," says Kupperberg of creating and populating an entire planet. "The specifics come as I do it."

As far as Arion himself goes, Kupperberg describes him as "not a happy person." For one thing, he is young in an old world — being only 70 years old when most in Atlantis are well over 200 — and he "feels a great responsibility" in his position as a Lord. "There's no room for laughing and chuckling with these problems facing the world," as Arion sees it. He is good and brave and extremely powerful, but he continually discovers that he is being used by a great number of forces. In this world there "isn't much room for indepedant action," and Arion feels frustrated, caught up in events he has no control over. Even his romance with the Lady Chian is "more of her initiation than his."

When it comes to the art by Jan Duursema, Paul Kupperberg shares the view of those in the office who have been touting Duursema as a major new talent. "She's an incredibly talented artist who is able to bring this stuff together beautifully — a real find," says Kupperberg. When he and Laurie Sutton were creating the feature, he was concerned with finding a really sensational artist for the series, but preferably somebody new. "When I saw this mystery thing that Jan had done," recounts Kupperberg," I just said 'Hello, this is my artist!' "

ARION LORD OF ATLANTIS is edited by Ernie Colon, who also edits **GREEN LANTERN** and **THE FLASH**, and **THE DARING NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERGIRL** is edited by the longtime editor of all the Superman titles, Julie Schwartz.

EARTH!
THE MORNING SUN SPREADS GOLDEN AND CRIMSON HUES ACROSS THE BLEAK SNOWBOUND LAND. A STRANGELY BEAUTIFUL SIGHT... A VISTA WITH AN IRONIC COUNTERPOINT IN THE DRAMA THAT TAKES PLACE UNDER THE GLOW OF THE DISTANT SUN.
IRONIC, TOO, IS THE CONFLICT, PITTING THE WARRIOR NAMED WYNDE AGAINST THE MAN WHOSE FACE AND FORM IS THAT OF HIS LORD, ARION... BUT WHOSE SOUL IS THAT OF THE FORMER MYSTICAL MASTER OF THE CITY MU...
RELEASE HER, DEMON--OR BE PREPARED TO BE SLAIN WHERE YOU STAND!
HA HA HA! SLAY ME THEN, FOOL--OR DO YOU DARE? 'TIS NOT GARN PAANUTH THAT 'TWOULD DIE BY THINE BLADE. MY SPIRIT WOULD LIVE ON...WHILST THE FORM OF ARION WOULD BE THE ONE TO SUFFER DEATH!
WYNDE... DON'T LET HIM GOAD YOU TO THE ATTACK! STAY YOUR HAND!
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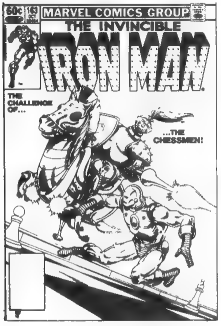
7

MARVEL NEWS TIDBITS

Newcomer Alan Zelenetz has written an issue of ***The Avengers***, #224, in which Tony Stark finds himself a new romantic liason — Janet Van Dyne. Her ex-husband, Yellowjacket, is still in jail after being framed by Egghead. All three are character members of the super-team. The issue was pencilled by another new face, Mark Bright, and inked by Brett Breeding. The next issue starts off a two-parter written by Steven Grant and drawn by Greg LaRocque, which features the return of sometime Avenger, The Black Knight, who has been off in the 13th century since early issues of ***The Defenders***. Thereafter, Roger Stern, current writer of Amazing Spider-Man, Doctor Strange, and Ghost Rider, will take over the scripting duties on the series. He is expected to wrap up the Yellow jacket brouhaha swiftly, leaving the hero once more on the right side of the law, but unreconciled with his former wife.

Iron Man #163 is the first in a series of confrontations that pit Iron Man against villains modelled after chessmen. This issue, by Denny O'Neill, Luke McDonald, and Steve Mitchell, introduces The Knight. The next issue continues the series with The Bishop, and #165 is expected to feature The Rook (no relation to the Warren magazine of the same name). Tony Stark's private life will be active, as a new romantic interest is being introduced, in the person of Indries Moomjies, an Indian woman whom Iron Man saves and then becomes involved with. According to Assistant Editor Michael Carlin, "she'll be around for a while at least."



AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #16 — Written by ROGER STERN, JOHN ROMITA, JR. (Pencils) and JOHN ROMITA, SR. (Inks) team for the first time on a Spidey book to chronicle another first the debut of the all new, all different **Captain Marvel**!

X-MEN #163

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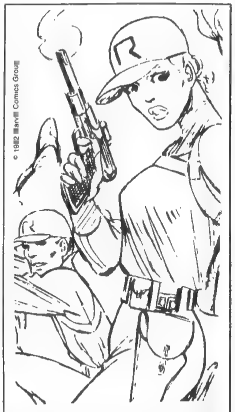
Marvel Mini-Series News . . . ***Hercules*** #2, scripted pencilled and inked by Bob Layton, tells of Hercules and The Recorder's attempts to rescue an other-worldly princess from alien pirates — in order to collect the reward money. ***The Vision and The Scarlet Witch*** #1, by Bill Mantlo, Rick Leonardi, and inkers Ian Akin and Brian Garvey, is entitled "Trick or Treat," and reveal what happens when Marvel's foremost android and mutant sorceress couple move to New Jersey and prepare for their first Halloween — they get real demons at the door.

Peter Parker #73 begins an epic cycle of stories, "City War". Bill Mantlo and Al Milgrom plan to involve The Kingpin, The Owl, and Doctor Octopus in a very complex storyline involving complete control of New York City.

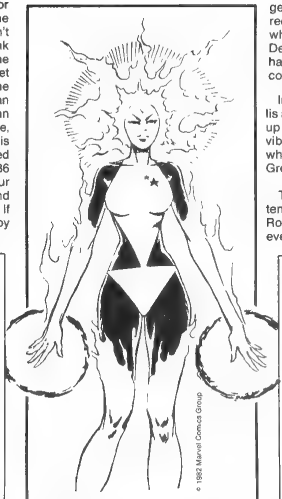


WHAT IF . . . ? #36 — A replay of FANTASTIC FOUR #1 with JOHN BYRNE asking "What if the FF Had Not Gained Their Powers?" "What If Nova Hadn't Lost His Powers?" Written by BILL MANTLO, art by MIKE VOSBURG.

The contents of **What If?** are set for the next couple of issues: In #35, the cover story is "What If Elektra Hadn't Died?" It's written and drawn by Frank Miller and inked by Terry Austin. The other features are "What if Yellowjacket **Had** Died?", a story set during the hero's latest mental breakdown, by Alan Zelenetz and Greg LaRocque, plus an Untold Tale of The Marvel Universe, "The Origin of the Cat People," which is written by Roger Stern and pencilled and inked by Steve Ditko. **What If** #36 includes "What If The Fantastic Four Had Never Got Powers," written and drawn by John Byrne, and "What If Nova Hadn't Given Up His Powers," by Bill Mantlo and Mike Vosburg.

Thor faces Graviton in issue #324, courtesy of Doug Moench, Alan Kupperberg, and Jim Mooney. After that, he meets up once more with longtime Silver Surfer foe Mephisto, and must do battle with Mephisto's latest pawn, Darkoth the Death-Demon, who used to be an old buddy of The Thing's. In #326, The Scarlet Scarab, the Egyptian hero/villain from the pages of ***The Invaders*** returns after a "forty year absence." In addition, plans are laid for a subplot involving The Lady Sif, and her relationship with Thor, as well as a continuing "Tales of Asgard" backup series. The covers to all these issues are by Ed Hannigan and a variety of inkers, namely Joe Rubinstein, Al Milgrom, and Brent Anderson.

The ***X-Men/Teen Titans*** team up book has been delayed until 7/20 release.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X-MEN #164 — Script by CHRIS CLAREMONT. Inks by BOB WIACEK. Penciller DAVE COCKRUM turns in a stellar performance on his last **X-Men** job as an old friend is given a new incarnation as the incandescent **Binary**!

Team America #7 will be pencilled by Luke McDonald.

Rom #37 is inked by Ian Akin and Brian Garvey. Mantlo and Buscema do their usual chores.

Indian Jones, the continuing series based on Raiders of the Lost Ark, to be written and drawn by John Byrne, is officially on the Marvel schedule for release August 17. Inks are by Terry Austin.

Marvel's Summer Annual News:

The Avengers Annual is by J.M. DeMatteis and Al Milgrom — The Avengers must battle the Defenders, at the request of Nebulon, The Celestial Man, who's been making trouble for The Defenders since #12, when he tried to have the Earth flooded to be sold as cosmic real estate.

In the ***Iron Man Annual***, by Peter Gillis and Jerry Bingham, Iron Man teams up with The Black Panther to protect a vibranium mine from Eric Killmonger, who was last seen (dead) in the McGregor/Graham ***Jungle Actions***.

The ***Captain American Annual***, written by J.M. Dematteis and drawn by Ron Wilson, stars every man who has ever been Captain America. Since most of them are dead, the issue involves flashbacks, courtesy of the time-travelling Mister Buda, from Jack Kirby's ***Captain America's Bicentennial Battles*** tabloid of six years ago.

Crazy magazine has been cancelled.

DC NEWS TIDBITS

THE BEST OF DC DIGEST #31 will reprint the initations of four JLA members: Black Canary (O'Neil/Dillin); Red Tornado (Wein/Dillin); the Elongated Man (Wein/Dillin); and Zatanna (Conway/Dillin). The cover is by Gil Kane.

THE FLASH will shortly begin a multi-part story involving the reformed Heat Wave. The creative team remains Cary Bates (script), Carmine Infantino (pencils), and Dennis Jensen (inks).

Dcotor Fate's strip will be moving out of the back of ***THE FLASH*** and into the back of ***SWAMP THING***, where it will continue under the same creative team of Pasko and Giffen. Replacing it in ***THE FLASH*** will be a revival of the Creeper, drawn by Dave Gibbons. No scripter has yet been chosen.

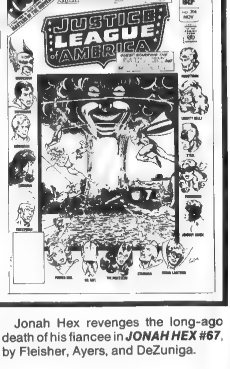
Evil Star returns in ***GREEN LANTERN #159***. The staff is Mike W. Barr (script), Keith Pollard (pencils), and Mike DeCarlo (inks). In the back of the ***GREEN LANTERN*** book, the feature "**Tales of the Green Lantern Corps**" will feature the work of ***DC's*** newest upcoming artists.

ADVENTURE COMICS DIGEST #494 features the second in the new series of "***Challengers of the Unknown***" stories, by Bob Rozakis and George Tuska, with inks by Andy Mushynsky. The issue also features reprints of: "**Superboy's Big Brother**" (the first Mon-El story from ***SUPERBOY #89***); "***The Legion of Super-Villains***" (from ***SUPERMAN #147***); another chapter in Skeates' and Aparo's "***Search for Mera***" serial from ***AQUAMAN #40-8***; The Spectre in "***Sinister Lives of Captain Skull***" by Gardner Fox and Murphy Anderson; and a Golden Age "***Shazam!***" reprint.

"**Captain Marvel Faces Fear.**" The cover for this package is by Keith Giffen.

THE NEW TEEN TITANS #26 features the much-rumored story involving teenage runaways. George Perez has expressed high hopes for this story, and claims that he scheduled "more time than for any other cover" to do its cover, which utilizes some long-forgotten production techniques.

The pretenders to the name ***DOOM PATROL*** will guest-star with Superman in ***DC COMICS PRESENTS #52***. Script by Paul Kupperberg.



Jonah Hex revenges the long-ago death of his fiancee in ***JONAH HEX #67***, by Fleisher, Ayers, and DeZuniga.

While Green Lantern is out in space for a year, his old friend the Flash will be battling GL's old foe Goldface in a mutli-partner beginning in ***FLASH #315***.

Robin, Zatanna, Wonder Woman, and Hawkman guest-star in the Superman/Batman story in ***WORLD'S FINEST #288***.

Feature News Preview

MARK EVANIER TALKS ABOUT THE RETURN OF BLACKHAWK

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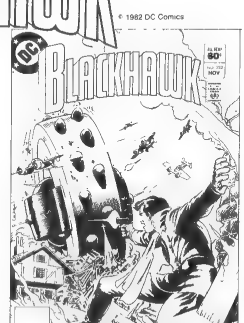


THE BLACKHAWKS, the archetypal fighting team of World War II comics, will return this Summer in a revival of their dormant comics series. The series will be written by Mark Evanier, drawn by Dan Spiegle, and edited by Mary Wolfman (issue #1 was edited by Len Wein).

COMICS FEATURE contacted writer Evanier at home and learned much about the approach the new **BLACKHAWKS** comic will feature. "What I'm trying to do with this version of the series," comments Evanier, "is to take what we all feel are the best points of its long run, with the emphasis on the early years, of course. When you revive a series with as much history behind it as **BLACKHAWKS** has, you have to throw some of it out because it's too cumbersome. And, of course, the "**Blackhawks**" series had its ups and downs, and there's no reason to adhrere to the downs."

The series will, according to Evanier, "start the story of the Blackhawks all over again. The first story begins with the Nazi invasion of Poland, and it contains a flashback to Blackhawk's origin." Evanier plans to progress through the war in a manner that is "more or less chronological. I want to take the events of the war in order — unless sales go down, I get fired, or the war ends." Evanier also notes, though, that at the rate the series' internal chronology is progressing, it will be "ninety years" before the war ends. "The first issue takes place entirely on May 10, the second on May 11, and the third on May 14. At this rate, I'll be at retirement age before I get to America's entry into the war."

Certainly the chronological-progression strategy brings with its own inherent problems? "It's very tricky," admits Evanier. "When I first started thinking about it, I wanted the Blackhawks to be present at every major battle in Europe — then I learned that for the first couple of years in Europe, the Nazis won every major battle. It wouldn't look good for our boys to be present at three straight years of defeats, so I had to change my aims somewhat. There's no easy answer to it. I have to keep finding places for the Blackhawks to be where they can be victorious, yet still not victorious enough to change the course of the war. The way I see it, the answer is for the Blackhawks never to be on the front lines. I seem them as one of the most powerful forces for freedom that the underground and the resistance possess. They'll be around wherever the Nazis are trying something sneaky."

The completed Blackhawk group will include all seven of the group's original members. When asked if the line-up would include the oriental stereotype Chop-Chop, Evanier replied, "Yes, although we're playing him a little differently. We're taking the stance that his Coolie motif is a pose that he uses — mainly for the group's undercover work. The whole 'so solly' routine gets him into places where the other Blackhawks couldn't pass. Chop Chop is also a karate champion, and we're playing up the fact that he's the best hand-to-hand fighter in the group."

Are there any other alterations in the presentations of the Blackhawks? "Yes, but very minor ones," responds Evanier. "We had to make some choices, because in some cases some of the original issues themselves contradicted each other. Chuck, the American Blackhawk, was at some times from Brooklyn and at other times from Texas. We had to decide, so Len and I decided on Texas. We're also making Hendrickson older than his teammates, which in some stories he was — although in others he seemed to be the same age as everyone else. We though that it would introduce a different viewpoint into the group that way."

Is Blackhawk going to continue to be — as the DC Coming Attractions indicated — the "greatest Polish war hero of World War II ?"

"Well, he'll be right up there with Bobby Vinton," quips Evanier. "But no, we haven't definitely established him as being Polish. We're leaving it ambiguous for now by stating that his family was **in Poland** at the beginning of his origin sequence. We'll decide what to do on that later."

What about general attitudes toward the book? "In the beginning, at least, I'm going to try to make the book

appeal to people who don't know the thirty-odd years of **BLACKHAWKS** history. I don't think we should make demands like that on the readers. I won't be contradicting any of the old material, but I'm not going to assume that every reader out there knows about the mysterious characters who appeared in **BLACKHAWKS** in 1943. I'd like to write stories that both old readers and new readers can enjoy. The single exception to that policy of not bringing back old stuff is the War Wheel, which appears in issue #2. When I said I'd be writing **BLACKHAWK**, almost everyone I told asked me about the War Wheel. **Marv** and **Len** asked me about the War Wheel — so I put it in."

Does the exclusion of extraneous material from the stories preclude any guest-stars or cross-over appearances? "For the time being, yes," states Evanier. "I want to write stories, not segments of the DC Universe. I don't see any reason why we should feel compelled to introduce guest-stars into a series which was created to function — and did function, very successfully — on its own. I don't even see why there's any reason to tie all the DC series together, just because they're published by the same company. It's like insisting that all the movies released by M.G.M. have to take place in the same universe."

What place will this series have among the multi-Earth DC universe, then? "I don't know," Evanier, "and I think I'll leave that to other people to figure out. As far as I'm concerned, they're on their own Earth entirely. I don't think the **ALL-STAR SQUADRON**, for instance, will be crossing over into **BLACKHAWKS**, or vice versa — even though it's the same war we're dealing with. Also, Roy's got a head start on me."

How does artist Dan Spiegle's work compare with the different versions of the **BLACKHAWKS** in the past? "Well, I love Dan Spiegle's work and I as the one who recommended him for this project, so I'm on his side. But let me say that I think Spiegle has, without **imitating** the style of the other great **BLACKHAWK** artists, come up with something very similar in his own style. Something Dan is concentrating on, though, is differentiating the characters visually. He's giving them different facial structures and body structures. We want the characters to be able to be told apart without their hair colors — or accents. In general, Dan's approach to the series is a very heavy, dark, war comic style. We want the feel of the strip to be realistic. Back in the Golden Age of **BLACKHAWKS**, when some fantastic element — such as a monster or the War Wheel — was introduced, it looked all the more fantastic and frightening because everything around it looked so real."

"Dan is, in many ways, making up for my lack of reference in some areas. The first story takes place in a small Dutch village. Dan researched the area, Dutch culture, Dutch architecture . . . everything that he thought he'd be able to use. You could take panels from that story and build you own authentic Dutch village from them. Dan has also made up for my lack of accuracy in knowing about weaponry of that period."

What genre is the new **BLACKHAWKS** series? "That's a trick one, too," responds Evanier. "This series has the potential to appeal to **both** super-hero comic **and** war comic fans — or **neither**. Traditionally, readers have passed up some wonderful war comics, so I'm trying to lure them in with the book's slight super-hero overtones, but I can't go too far in that direction because everyone agrees that the **BLACKHAWKS'** super-hero period was a dismal failure. I'm hoping to play up the inter-personal relationships between the group members, and use that to keep the readers coming back — instead of relying on moldy old continuity points."

"I'm also straddling a middle ground about historical accuracy, since one of the things I had to do while researching the war was to find which war stories Robert Kanigher hadn't already done 72 million times — and done better than I could. I want to do new things with the old events."

What was the impetus for the **BLACKHAWK** revival? "Marv Wolfman wanted to revive it since forever — and started asking about it as soon as he came back to DC. Originally, Marv and Dave Cockrum were to do it, but things never came together — Dave couldn't commit himself to a monthly book at that point, or something — so when the project finally did get off the ground, so to speak, Dave was still unavailable, and Marv had also become over-committed. They were looking for an artist, and I suggested Dan Spiege. When the time came for them to get a writer, someone suggested me. Marv and Dave had their chance to do a "**Batman/Blackhawks**" team-up in **BRAVE AND BOLD**, and now it's Dan's and my turn — we don't get Batman, though. We want to stay on this strip for a long time, so luckily, Marv and Dave found other ways to be involved in the book." (Wolfman is editor and Cockrum is cover artist for the **BLACKHAWKS**.)

"See, the problem with the **BLACKHAWKS** has never been with its concept. It's a great concept. You'll notice that certain characters seem to have lives on their own. You ever wonder why the Flash faltered at the end of the Golden Age, but Wonder Woman continued? It's the difference in concept. Wonder Woman is a terrific concept, and the Flash is a lesser one. The Blackhawks are such a terrific concept that people remember them long after their comic has stopped publication — and people remember the good things about the concept even though ten, fifteen, twenty years of poor issues, or issues which have nothing to do with that concept. Outside of a few issues written by Marv, and some by Bob Haney, I don't think the **BLACKHAWKS** have had a good issue in almost twenty years, but there's still a lot of interest in them. A movie company, reportedly, is interested in them — and if that's true, that might have something to do with the revival, too. But there was a lot of interest in this series, a lot of love for the characters and for the concept behind it. Everyone was asking me what I was doing with it — and they asked about the War Wheel. I think that any comic with that sort of loyalty has the potential to become a superstar comic."

People In The News

J.M. DeMatteis returns to writing ***Captain America*** after the wrap-up of the Howling Commandos great-appearance in #274. #275 contains an odd pair of villains — Arnim Zola, the Bio-Fanatic, last seen when Jack Kirby was writing and drawing the series, and Vermin, a villain who controlled rats and other city pests. The art team remains Mike Zeck and John Beatty.

Frank Miller is drawing several covers for ***DC***. He has already done a ***WONDER WOMAN*** (with WW's skeleton imprisioned in a dungeon) and a ***WORLD'S FINEST***.

Trevor Von Eeden's artwork in this year's ***BATMAN ANNUAL*** will be reproduced directly from his pencil work.

Don Heck will ink his own pencils on JUSTICE LEAGE OF AMERICA #209. One or two recently-rediscovered fill-ins by Gerry Conway and Rich Buckler will follow, then Heck and regular inker Romeo Tanghal will return to the strip.

Dan Jurgens will draw ***WARLORD #64***. The scripter remains Mike Grell.

DC has hired Neal Pozner as design director, beginning March 22nd. Pozner will oversee the entire visual appearance of all ***DC*** Comics and special projects. He has previously worked in a similar capacity at Arista Records.

The ***Thor Annual*** is by Alan Zelentz and Bob Hall, and according to Michael Carlin, features "tons O' gods. More gods than you can count on your fingers and toes and anybody else's in the room." They all battle Demigorge, The God-Eater. The issue also reveals the origin of the gods, depicts an Asgardian funeral, and presents a map of Asgard, for any who might get lost in the Realm Eternal.

The first issue of ***Spider-Woman*** after Chris Claremont and Steve Leialoha leave (#47) introduces the new creative team: Ann Nocenti, Al Milgrom's assistant, and newcomer Brian Postman. In this issue, Spider-Woman encounters a new foe, Daddy Longlegs, who is reportedly "very weird." The next issue brings back Gypsy Moth, and guest-stars Jack Russell, Werewolf By Night. The new team expects to take a while in wrapping up the various character plotlines left open by the departure of Claremont, before they are able to take the character off in the new directions.

Mike Sekowsky has returned to work for ***DC***. Before he is assigned a regular series , he will be doing various fill-in assignments for ***DC***, such as a "**Tales of Green Lantern Corps**," and an "**I, Vampire**."

E. Nelson Bridwell has written an issue of **CAPTAIN CARROT AND HIS AMAZING ZOO CREW**, which features a was-wolf (and was plotted by Roy Thomas, the series' new editor). Bridwell might become the series' regular writer.

Paul Kupperberg is the new regular writer on ***SUPERBOY***, beginning with issue #36, in which Superboy meets a psychokinetic. Julius Schwartz continues as editor on that series, with Kurt Schaffenberger as regular artist.

In the forthcoming ***HISTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE*** maxi-series, George Perez's pencil work will be embellished by as many different inkers as there are issues of the series (12, currently). In some cases, Perez predicts, the work will not wind up looking much like present-day Perez work (as with projected inker Alfredo Alcala on the "barbarians" issue and with Tony DeZuniga on the "western" issue.

The inker on Brian Bolland's pencils on the new ***CAMELOT 3000*** is Bruce Patterson.

Alternative News

Underwood and Miller is releasing a signed, limited hardcover edition of the new Elfquest novel, **Raid at Sorrow's End**. The book will be 320 pages, bound in imitation leather with red and gold foil stamping and retail at $30.

The July issue of the **American Cinematographer** will be a special issue devoted to Blade Runner.

Deja-Vu is a new title from Fantaco featuring the early fanzine work of Jeff Jones, Berni Wrightson, and Mike Kaluta. The Wrightson work includes no pieces which previously appeared in his book **Mutants**. The publication will be magazine size, 48 pages on white stock. The covers are by Wrightson. Fantaco is also releasing the second issue of **Gates of Eden** on white stock instead of on slick paper, thereby reducing the price from $3.50 to $2.95.

Ballantine Books has released **Mirage**, a new collection of fine art by Boris Vallejo. The book also contains poems by Doris Vallejo which relate to the paintings.

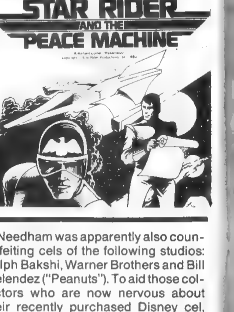
Several new books of animation are about to see release. **The Treasures of Disney Animation Art** presents 400 full-color illustrations in a deluxe, 324 page volume which measures 15 × 11 ¾". September will see the release of still another book on the animation work of the Disney Studios, **Walt Disney's World of Fantasy**. Both are high priced deluxe packages and continue the recent series of books related to work originating from the studios.

Comic Primer is a new project to be launched by Comico, a new company organized by Gerry Giovinco, Phil Lasorda, and Bill Cucinotta. Based in Norristown, Pennsylvania, the company plans to issue the primer as either a

forty page or a forty-eight page comic size magazine, with black and white interiors and a four color cover. The book will feature a number of new heroes: Victor, Slaughterman, Az, Mr. Justice, and Skrog. The storylines will be of general superhero nature. Also planned is a four color bi-monthly comic book to be called Comico Presents. Newsstand distribution is planned for the latter title.

Richard Comely, of **Captain Canuck** fame, is back again. Star Rider and the Peace Machine is magazine size, 64 black and white pages with a glossy full color cover. The first magazine features four new stories with all new characters. "Star Rider and the Peace Machine" is the continuing story of Ryan Haney who comes back from the future to stop the conspiracy. "The Raft" is the saga of two teenage boys trying to escape Soviet occupied Eastern Canada to the free south during WW III.

"Komputor Keene, Steel Chameleon", and the feature acricle "The Great Conspiracy". This book may prove very interesting as Comely is using the title both to present superheroic stories and to present his political viewpoint. To quote from his promotional letter, "(these stories) deal with the most important issue of our day — freedom vs totalitarianism. Featured short articles expose and discuss the most important and dangerous phenomenon of our time; the conspiracy to create a one world dictatorial government."



Animation News

FAKE ANIMATION CELS!

William Needham, also known as Old Friends-Cine Gallery, has been reproducing and selling counterfeit animation cels. Walt Disney Productions was the first company to file suit against Needham and the U.S. Marshal, acting on a court order, seized all the counterfeit cels in the possession of Needham. Also seized were the materials used to produce counterfeit cels.

Some of the cels had been imprinted with a copy of the seal which Disney uses on authentic cels which are sold to art galleries throughout the country. Needham was also counterfeiting the labels which Disney includes with its authentic cels and a supply of these labels were also seized.

Disney is seeking an injunction against Needham to restrain him from any further reproduction or sale of the counterfeit items and a judgment to recover Needham's profits, reimbursement for Disney's damages, and exemplary damages in the amount of $250,000.00. Disney has sued for copyright infringement and unfair competition.

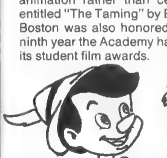
Needham was apparently also counterfeiting cels of the following studios: Ralph Bakshi, Warner Brothers and Bill Melendez ("Peanuts"). To aid those collectors who are now nervous about their recently purchased Disney cel, Disney Studios will provide a list of galleries authorized to sell authentic cels. Write to Walt Disney Productions, c/o Disney Original Art Program, 500 South Buena Vista Street, Burbank, California 91521. As for the authenticity of the other cels, caveat emptor!

ACADEMY AWARD WINNER

Kathy Zielinski, a twenty-one year old California resident, is this year's winner in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Student Film Awards competition. Her cartoon, "Guess Who's for Dinner?", earned her $1,000 in prize money. Four other student films were also honored by the Academy. The public will be able to see the top student films this fall, when they are scheduled to tour some of the nation's museums and universities.

"Dinner" is about a kid who begs his mother not to feed him spinach because of a monster and thinks the boy is just trying to avoid having to eat the dreaded vegetable. Zielinski made the film while a student at the California Institute of the Arts and executive thought enough of the film to offer Zielinski a full time job at Disney Studios. She plans on using her prize money to develop her next animated short, "Hide and Seek". The film will be about a little girl who plays hide-and-seek with a monster.

Another animated short using clay animation rather than cel animation entitled "The Taming" by Bill Jarcho of Boston was also honored. This is the ninth year the Academy has presented its student film awards.



CHANGES IN FANTASYLAND

The Fantasyland section in Disneyland is more or less closed down until Summer 1983 although a few attractions are still available for use. New attractions and revamping of older rides will bring a new look to this area. Among the changes:

**The King Arthur Carousel, will be relocated away from the Sleeping Beauty Castle, allowing easier access into Fantasyland. The Carrousel will be moved to a newly landscaped area.

**"Adventures of Pinocchio" will feature an audio-animatronic Jiminy Cricket helping guests in vehicles resembling Gepetto's carved wooden toys decide which path to take. (There will also be a new Pinocchio-themed restaurant.

**The Peter Pan ride will let visitors witness a swordfight between Captain Hook and Pan on a pirate ship just before Tinkerbell turns the ship to gold.

**Mr. Toad's Wild Ride will now careen through a village where a hat shop once stood.

**Dumbo's Flying Elephant Ride will now fly over a lagoon and a fountain of water. (Timothy Mouse will still remain directing the parade of soaring circus Dumbos.)

**Both Alice in Wonderland and Snow White's Adventures will be enlarged.

While these changes are taking place, visitors can still ride on Casey Jr., It's a Small World, Motor Boat Cruise, Storybook Land Canal Boats, Mr. Toad and Alice in Wonderland. Several years ago, Disneyland revamped the Tomorrowland section, adding Space Mountain and the People Mover among other attractions.

EPCOT CENTER

The Environmental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT) near Disneyworld in Florida is scheduled for opening on October first. The gigantic Florida project with an estimated cost of over eight hundred million dollars is divided into two areas — Future World and World Showcase.

The entrance to Future World will be a 180-foot high geosphere called Spaceship Earth. Several U.S. corporations including Kraft, Exxon, General Motors, and Kodak sponsor attractions in this section.

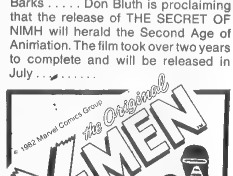
World Showcase will showcase the cultures of eight different nations in authentic settings. Excursion boats, much like those of northern Europe will transport guests across the 40 acre lagoon to and from the international pavilions. Within World Showcase, American Express and Coca Cola will present the AMERICAN ADVENTURE where Ben Franklin, Mark Twain and thirty-six other audio-animatronic figures will relive great moments in this country's history.

The EPCOT concept has evolved into this "World's Fair" theme park. Originally, it was Walt Disney's idea to have an actual community, with real live people in a controlled environment making use of all the technological advantages the Disney corporation could develop. After Walt's death, it was decided that his concept was unworkable. It was felt there would be no way to effectively control the residents so that it would be an ideal community.

Just as EPCOT opens, Disneyworld will be finishing its year long "tencennial" celebration.

BITS AND PIECES

There is a new exhibit on the Universal Studio Tours. "The World of Woody Woodpecker" honors Walter Lantz and his creations. Lantz has worked with the studio for almost sixty years and this new exhibit features a display of how studio animation is done and a collection of memorablia ..... A new issue of ANIMANIA, the Animated Film Quarterly was released ($2.50 a copy from David Mruz, 3112 Holmes Avenue South, Minneapolis, Mn. 55408).This issue features a long interview with Jack Hannah wherein he talks about his long association with Donald Duck and what is was like working with Carl Barks ..... Don Bluth is proclaiming that the release of THE SECRET OF NIMH will herald the Second Age of Animation. The film took over two years to complete and will be released in July .....



Next season on Marvel's Saturday morning TV show, ***Spider-Man and his Amazing Friends*** will see the introduction of all the original X-Men, in their original costumes. Even the now-deceased Jean Grey will appear, in her original identity of Marvel Girl. Tied up in this will be a special "Origin of Iceman" episode.

THE NEW SATURDAY MORNING SEASON ON ABC

The fight for ratings on Saturday morning is as strong as it is on prime time tv. The success of the Smurfs on NBC convinced that network not to expand the Today show to seven days a week because it would interfere with the early morning Smurf adventures. In third place on Saturday morning is ABC. Up until April, ABC had three different schedules for next Fall: An adventure schedule which included the Daredevil pilot, an adventure-comedy schedule and an all comedy schedule. It finally settled on an all comedy schedule and next Fall, ABC will feature the following shows:

SUPERFRIENDS — A half hour show with the adventures of Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman, Robin, Black Vulcan, Apache Chief, The Wonder Twins, The Samurai and a new hero, El Dorado. Eight new episodes will be mixed in with encore showings from previous seasons. This one is from Hanna-Barbera.

THE LITTLE RASCALS/RICHIE RICH SHOW — This show is also from H-B. The Little Rascals will be Spanky, Alfalfa, Darla, Porky and Buchwheat who is described as a mechanical wizard. Richie Rich will be similar to his adventures of last season although this season Mark Evanier will be story editing. At the last minute, H-B got the rights to do Pac Man and the rumor is that those segments will pop up in this show.

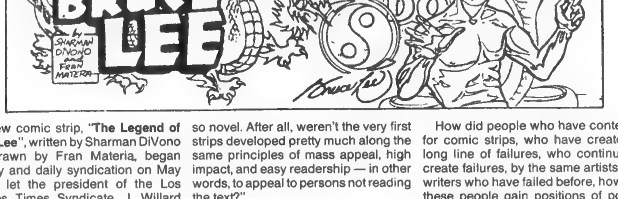
THE MORK AND MINDY/LAVERNE AND SHIRLEY SHOW — Once again, this is a show from H-B. Two quarter hour stories show Mork and Mindy in a teenage setting with Mork going to school to learn about Earthlings and their customs. He drives a hot rod car shaped like an egg, sleeps hanging in a closet and can use his finger as a flashlight, a vacuum and a blow dryer. Voices will be supplied by Robin Williams and Pam Dawber.

Laverne and Shirley will still be in the military in the new episodes filmed for this season.

THE SCOOBY, SCRAPPY, YABBA-DOO, PUPPY SHOW — At least one hour of this ninety minute show will be supplied by Hanna-Barbera. Most people are familiar with Scooby-Doo and his newphew Scrappy-Doo but this season will introudce Yabba-Doo, Scrappy's uncle who is Way Out West. The remaining segment on this show is produced by Ruby—Spears and focuses on the antics of Petey, the pup, an animated character first introduced on the ABC Weekend Specials. During the course of his weekly adventures, Petey, his girlfriend Dolly and three other canine friends join in a world wide search for Petey's lost family.

Hanna-Barbera will be supplying over a hundred and twenty-five half hours of animation this coming season. Its nearest competitor is Marvel Animation, formerly DePatie-Freleng, which will be supplying about forty half hours.

STRIP NEWS



A new comic strip, "**The Legend of Bruce Lee**", written by Sharman DiVono and drawn by Fran Materia, began Sunday and daily syndication on May 23. I'll let the president of the Los Angeles Times Syndicate, J. Willard Colston, tell you about it. (Quote from Editor and Publisher.)

"This strip is probably the world's first adventure strip deliberately aimed downscale and at very young readers. '**The Legend of Bruce Lee**'", Colston said in a sales letter to editors, "is not sophisticated and definitely not aimed at an upscale, adult audience."

He goes on to say, "Come to think about it, maybe this strip's concept isn't so novel. After all, weren't the very first strips developed pretty much along the same principles of mass appeal, high impact, and easy readership — in other words, to appeal to persons not reading the text?"

In a word, no! This contempt, for the readers and for the medium, is what is wrong with story strips today.

I have never read a nurse romance. I probably never will. But I am sure that best selling nurse romances are written by people who do read and love nurse romances. Best selling comic strips are written by people who know and love comic strips.

How did people who have contempt for comic strips, who have created a long line of failures, who continue to create failures, by the same artists and writers who have failed before, how did these people gain positions of power over the medium we love? How do they keep their power, when their one idea is that they can sell you garbage and make you like it?

The people who make the Hall of Fame love what they do. People like George Lucas, and Gene Roddenberry. People like Hal Foster, Carl Barks, Will Eisner, Charles Schulz, Walt Kelly, Wendy Peni, Dave Sim, Gary Trudeau, Dick Moores, and Warren Tufts.

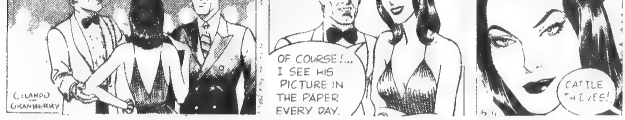
NEW ARTIST ON BUZ SAWYER.

John Celardo has replaced Henry Schlensker as artist on the Buz Sawyer comic strip. Celardo, who has also done comic book work, is best known for the Tarzan comic strip, which he drew, Sunday and daily, from 1954 through 1967. He drew more Tarzan strips than any other artist, and for the last several years of his stint on the strip he wrote the script as well. After Tarzan, he briefly replaced Joe Kubert on Tales of the Green Beret, just before that strip folded in 1968. The daily Tarzan strip currently consists of Celardo reprints. His first Buz Sawyer is dated 5-3-82.

Buz Sawyer is the creation of Roy Crane. Crane is sometimes credited with the creation of the adventure strip. He had adventerous episodes in the at-first all humor strip Wash Tubbs as early as 1927. Some of the best Wash Tubbs stories are available in a reprint from Luna Press. The title Wash Tubbs was later changed to Capt. Easy, to reflect the change in the strip from humor to adventure. In 1943 Crane left Capt. Easy to write and draw Buz Sawyer. His daily Buz Sawyer is one of the most collected strips, though old time fans usually credit Capt. Easy with being his greatest work. The Sunday Buz Sawyer, while it had a few adventure episodes, was more usually humor by a ghost artist/writer. Buz himself seldom appeared in the Sunday, which was dominated by the misadventures of Buz's friend Roscoe Sweeney. The strip now appears daily only.

For at least twenty years, Buz Sawyer has been written by Fred Granbury and drawn by Hank Schlensker, overseen and with occasional art by Crane. Not until Roy Crane's death did these two receive credit for the strip. Still, without Crane's influence, the strip has gone downhill, and is no longer numbered among the top adventure strips.

BUZ SAWYER/ *by Celardo & Granberry*


TAMPA, MEET AN OLD WAR BUDDY OF MINE.
STRANGE!... HE LOOKS FAMILIAR.
CELARDO GRANBERRY
BUZ SAWYER!... ACE SLEUTH-HOUND!
OF COURSE!... I SEE HIS PICTURE IN THE PAPER EVERY DAY.
AND WHAT BRINGS YOU TO OUR SLEEPY LITTLE CATTLE TOWN IN THE WILDS OF FLORIDA MR. SAWYER?
CATTLE ?HE ?EE!

FLASH GORDON ARTIST JAILED

Dan Barry, who is in charge of the Flash Gordon comic strip, has been sentenced to one year in jail for income tax evasion. People who have worked for him have few nice things to say about the man.

Dan Barry is a good artist, who has done some nice work for the DC science fiction books in the early fifties. Before that, he worked as a ghost on the Tarzan comic strip, under Burne Hogarth, and then continued the Tarzan daily strip for several years under his own name. His brother, Sy Barry, draws the daily and Sunday Phantom.

Flash Gordon was created as a Sunday page in 1934 by Alex Raymond. A daily strip by Austin Briggs ran from 1940 to 1944. In 1951, sparked by the movie Destination Moon, there was a science fiction "boom", and the daily Flash Gordon was revived, with Dan Barry in charge. He who had been a ghost himself employed ghosts on the strip from the first. Among those who worked on the strip: Murphy Anderson, Harvey Kurtzman, Frank Frazetta, Harry Harrison, and Al Williamson. The strip was excellent, particularly in the early fifties and again in the late fifties and early sixties. In 1967 the then current artist, Mac Raboy, died, and Dan Barry took over the Sunday strip as well as the daily.

FLASH GORDON By DAN BERRY

HE-ELP! HELP, MASTER! SAVE ME!
AMMAD! THE ONLY SURVIVOR!
I SHOULD LET YOU DROWN!
FIRST CHANCE HE GETS, HE'LL TRY TO KILL ME AGAIN... FOR MY MONEY BELT!

IT'S AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE PEREZ

BY RICHARD HOWELL & CAROL KALISH

WHY DOES THE MIND-BENDING SUPER-HERO CALLED MEMO WANT TO BREAK UP THE DOOM PATROL?
WHAT IS THE SINISTER SECRET BEHIND THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL, THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS GROUP?
WHEN GENERAL IMMORTUS STRIKES, WILL THE WORLD'S STRANGEST HEROES SURVIVE?
WILL THE DOOM PATROL DEFEAT THE GROTESQUE CHIEF AND HIS PILE-DRIVING PLASTIC MEN?
THE AMAZING ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS AWAIT YOU WITHIN— SO START READING!
100 PAGES STARRING THE WILDEST SUPER TEAM OF ALL!
DC SUPER-HERO SPECTACULAR
DOOM PATROL
THE NEW TEEN TITANS
BECOME ONE WITH THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL!

"I genuinely enjoy doing group books; I guess that kinda showed."

HOWELL: Over the past year and a half, George, you have gotten even more popular than you were before.

PEREZ: Totally amazing.

HOWELL: Yeah. What are your ideas of why you're a popular artist?

PEREZ: Well, before, I was doing books which were popular to begin with—*FANTASTIC FOUR* and *AVENGERS* were popular. I genuinely enjoy doing group books; I guess that kinda showed. But it was one of those situations where, because of restrictions on the Fantastic Four (up until recently), the book always had a steady look. It had never altered. It wasn't until Bill Sinkiewicz and John Byrne that it finally started developing a different type of look. So, even though I was popular on the books (particularly on the Avengers), I was one of many artists who handled the strip well. When I went to DC to do the Titans, I had an agreement with Marv [Wolfman] that, "Okay, I'll do the Titans, if they guarantee me at least one issue of *JUSTICE LEAGUE*." The only reason I did it was to do the Justice League (Howell laughs), and I figured, after the disastrous second series they had done with the Titans, that this *"Titans"* will last five issues and that'll end my commitment, and I'll be gone.

HOWELL: Had you read the first series of *TEEN TITANS*?

PEREZ: Oh, sure! With Haney/Cardy? Sure I did! I loved those. And I was very disappointed with the second version, and just did not know if the new book would do that well. At that point, I didn't really care if the book *did* do that well, as long as I got an issue of *JUSTICE LEAGUE*—and it surprised me like anything to find out how well the book did. For five issues, I was starting—and now, I'm starting my twenty-first issue. I've already done the first issue of the mini-series for the book.

50¢ 20¢ NOV 1984
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES!
THE AVENGERS
STAND BACK, AVENGERS— THIS IS WHERE JARVIS TAKES OVER!

HOWELL: And there's an annual...

PEREZ: And there's an annual, which I'll be handling as well. I guess the *TITANS* is a book like *DAREDEVIL* under Miller—taking a book, even though there have been some pre-established standards, like Robin and all that for the Titans—and just start from scratch. Marv basically wanted to ignore everything that happened between the Titans of the 1960s-early 1970s (with Haney, Cardy, and Kane) and our version.

So we wanted to start from scratch and put much of our own personalities into it. I just love doing the book—we put a lot more thinking into it than, I guess, a lot of books get, unless the artist is into it.

HOWELL: Is that your only series assignment right now?

PEREZ: Well, after issue #200, I've given up *JUSTICE LEAGUE*—mostly because not only am I doing the *"Titans"* as a regular series, I've got the mini-series to do, I've got the annual to do, and with those, I'm handling close to 18 issues of the *"Titans"* in one year. That's a lot of issues of one book. But I'll also be doing work for Atari—since Atari's owned by Warner, they've managed to give us permission to do some actual design work and visuals for a new Atari game, tentatively called *"Swordquest."* It's still in the negotiating stages. I've done character sketches for it. Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway are doing the writing, and I'm doing the visuals, with Dick Giordano co-ordinating the whole thing.

HOWELL: In spare time.

PEREZ: In my spare time, because that I have to ink on my own. I intend to ink the annual, and I'm still the regular cover artist on *JLA*. (Len insisted I stay on, at least to keep the look consistent on the covers.) So, with that, last month I produced 132 pages. That's the equivalent of five books, or almost five books.

HOWELL: (Laughs) So, if you can do that every month, there's no problem.

PEREZ: I do 25 pages a week, so that's no real trouble. I also had the Atari things to do, which they gave me at the last minute, so I had to sneak those in on weekends. Ordinarily, I only work a four-day week anyway.

HOWELL: How many hours a day?

PEREZ: Oh, it can be anywhere from twelve—fat chance, unless the story takes place in a desert—to as much as eighteen hours a day, because of the number of characters and the amount of background I put in. But I work four *very hard* days. That leaves Friday free; it's payday and it's also the day I can design covers. And I get my weekends totally free. I spend them with my wife and never pick up a pencil.

HOWELL: Read comics...

PEREZ: No, I usually read the comics on Friday. Then, we just go out, get out of the house or watch television or play Scrabble. We love to play Scrabble. Just crazy little things to occupy our time. This vacation was something I desperately needed—it's our belated honeymoon, as it were.

HOWELL: This [interview and comics convention] isn't part of it, is it?

PEREZ: Well, this is just a little thing—Carol had never been to Boston before, so we came to Boston as a way of getting a little extra cash for the honeymoon. As it turns out, I'm also doing a bookstore signature party after the honeymoon, so with that and this, the honeymoon pays for itself. So...

KALISH: You hope you get many more of them? (General laughter)

PEREZ: It was my second time around. (Laughs) Then we go to Disney World...

HOWELL: Oh, you're going there?

PEREZ: Yeah, we're spending a week at Disney World; I've made reservations at Disney World Hotel and everything. We're gonna do everything up right, and then, when I get back, I'm gonna sit down and... work!

We actually got the book from three months behind schedule to a week ahead of schedule in one month. That was enough to drive a person out of his gourd.

HOWELL: I'll bet. Especially with the 80 characters in

"I can never rest on the fact that this is the best issue I've ever done. I've got to make sure the next one is better."

every book, all on every page...

PEREZ: Oh, sure. I also just did a *"Superman/Omac" DC PRESENTS* with Len Wein, about which I figured, "Oh boy—two characters!" It was also, in the year-and-a-half I've been working for DC, the first story I have done that was not a series. I did *"Firestorm"* for a few issues as a series; I did *JUSTICE LEAGUE* as a series; and I've done *TITANS* as a series. I had never done a single individual story. It was my first one. Len had Superman fighting this gigantic machine in the middle of Grand Central Station. Of course, you know, there are a lot of people running around there...

HOWELL: Naturally...

PEREZ: Yeah. They didn't let me get away with only two characters—not that I wanted to, anyway...

HOWELL: Is all the series work that you've done over the years your own choice? Would you rather contribute to a series?

PEREZ: Oh, I prefer series as far as professional standing; you make a bigger impact by staying on something. The audience sees you. And, if the books are popular, you want to stay on them for as long as possible, so that you get some kind of recognition, especially for the commercial value—either if you resell artwork, or just be able to get decent pay from your boss, because if you're steady, they're fairly sure that "Okay, he's reliable," so when raise time comes along, you're the first one on the list. I've gotten five raises in a year and a half now. My salary has gone up 85% since I started at DC.

HOWELL: You must be awfully reliable (laughs).

PEREZ: Well, once I got married, I suddenly had the responsibility of another person to take care of, so I finally buckled down to a schedule which I keep, and work at it. It works out well—I work at home, and my wife is at home, so we spend enough time together. But it's a definite discipline. I said, "Okay, if I want to make decent money on this trip, and if I want to prove not only to myself but to the company that I am a valuable artist to them, I've got to be consistent. I've got to produce the best work I can, and even though I work as fast as I can, I try not to compromise *too* much, and give them at least a consistent quality." The one thing I've tried to do—which seems to be working, since everyone on the staff seems to be pleased with every issue as it goes along—is I'm trying to keep bettering the issue before. I can never rest on the fact that this is the best issue I've ever done. I've got to make sure the next one is better. Sometimes I don't succeed (laughter), but at least it gives me something to strive for.

Marv and I live about half a mile from each other, so it's a very close relationship in the way we work. Before I came here, he dropped over the house so I could explain to him what I had done with the *"Cyborg"* chapter, the first of the mini-series, which deals with the life of Cyborg before he became a Titan. It was one of those things where Marv wasn't as pleased with the Cyborg story, because being Jewish in his upbringing, being different, he didn't really understand a black character who was raised in a ghetto and the problems that he faced. I was born and raised in a ghetto, so he allowed me the freedom. It was the first time I've ever taken that kind of freedom. I've had freedom, but never to that extent where, when Marv came over, he had to take notes. I had to explain the plot to him so that he'd be able to follow it. It's that kind of give-and-take. The book suffers from absolutely no ego problems. When Marv gives me a plot, he expects me to alter it, expects me to change things—either to omit something because I don't think it's right or just don't have the room for it, or restructure it because I think it'll be visually told better, but if I have an idea of what the character's going to say, when I give him the artwork, Marv may very well say he doesn't want to do that particular dialogue, and change the dialogue. That I understand, because that's his perogative. So it is give-and-take.

"There were some criticisms that I didn't agree with, and some that I did. I definitely did need more subtlety in my work."

HOWELL: Would you say that *"Titans"* is an ideal working situation?

"The TITANS is a perfect team book for me. I haven't enjoyed any series as much as I have enjoyed the TITANS."

PEREZ: As far as any of the books I've done, it is probably the most unified effort I've ever worked on. Marv and I work like a well-oiled machine. Often I would call him up and say I had a certain idea for what we should do in a future issue, and he would already have had that idea just a couple minutes before. He was going to call me about it. Or—most artists, when they're working, tend to write "Liner notes" on the sides of the pages, so that the writer knows what he's doing. I have never written a liner note for Marv (Howell laughs) since I've worked in the *"Titans."* And he has managed to second-guess me at least a good 85% of the time, and the other 15%, he has usually bettered it, because he's put in his own little surprises into it that I didn't expect. Of course, there are some things that we'll disagree on. But we agree that we will disagree. And Romeo Tanghal loves working on the book. At first, it took a while before I was really satisfied with his work, but he gives the look of the book. When he inked Curt Swan [*TEEN TITANS #5*] and when he inked Don Heck [*WONDER WOMAN #287*], when they did the *"Titans"* stories, he did give them that look that people have come to recognize as the Titans. And Romeo loves doing it. At first he was a little intimidated, because of the amount of work that my pencils require, but soon he became almost as fast with his inking as I am with my pencilling—he has actually inked some of those issues in one week.

HOWELL: (Indistinct sound resembling disgusted groan)

PEREZ: And Adrienne Roy loves coloring that book. She makes sure that is her regular assignment—no one colors that book except Adrienne Roy, unless there is a very good reason for it. During the first few issues, we had a lot of deadline troubles, so she missed one of the coloring assignments. She's only missed one in the entire run of the book. In fact, Marv is the one who's handled every single book. I've missed one and Adrienne's missed one. And even the letterer—we've only had two letterers in the entire series. Ben Oda and John Costanza are fairly consistent. (At this point, it looks like John Costanza may become the regular letterer, unless he gets overworked, and then it just gets shifted to Ben Oda again. But, either way, we have two very reliable letterers.) It's a book that *everyone* enjoys doing.

HOWELL: Real team project.

PEREZ: It's incredible. I've never worked on a book where I've had so much feeling that it is a work of love that *everyone* enjoys—not that I really enjoy drawing it, and I'm going to give it to a writer and not trust what the writer is going to do, or we're going to have so many disagreements of attitude toward a character that we're working at cross-purposes. When I worked on the *AVENGERS*, I was working with so many writers, it was hard to keep adjusting. David Michelinie has his way of doing it. Jim Shooter has his way of doing it. Steve Englehart had his way of doing it.

HOWELL: Gerry?

PEREZ: Gerry Conway, I only worked on three issues with. He had his own—staright super-hero. Don't worry about the motivation making sense; just the fact that it gets done. Don't worry about it—let's just keep the action flowing. Gerry did not worry too much about thinking how it happened, as long as it happened. I had a little trouble working with that style on *AVENGERS*; I had worked with Englehart before that, in a totally different style. Working with Gerry is totally different.

HOWELL: Does Gerry work full-script on *JUSTICE LEAGUE*?

PEREZ: When I first started, he was doing full scripts; I had the scripts that were designed for Dick Dillin. Dick worked full-script. Eventually, Gerry wanted to work Marvel-style, as *we* call it (Howell laughs); he wanted to do the plot, and give me much leeway. I did it that way; he changed in mid-story—*"Death is a Stacked Deck,"* which dealt with Tarot-card characters—about halfway through, he suddenly went from full script to synopsis. He said he enjoyed doing the synopsis pages a lot more—obviously, he didn't have to do anything with the script pages once I

OUR PURPLE RAY IS SOLAR-POWERED.. AND SOMETHING IS DISTURBING... NO, INTERCEPTING THE SOLAR COLLECTORS.
AN INSTANT COLLECTORS ITEM— FROM THE NEW DC!
NOTE

drew them, because they were already written. But he was able to think of things he hadn't thought of before because I drew things that he would not have asked me to draw. But I did enjoy working those few issues with a full script, because it gave me a discipline.

HOWELL: Was that the first time you had ever done that?

PEREZ: The only time I had ever worked full-script was my first *"Sons of the Tiger"* story, which was all the way back in 1974. Up until the *JLA*, I had never worked full-script. So when I did it, he had all the panels set up—sometimes he even did little sketches of how he thought a page should be laid out, which I usually would ignore. Obviously, he was designing it for Dick, and I wasn't Dick.

Sometimes I would do things like—if he had one panel with three balloons and characters just talking, I would shift it into two panels, split the dialogue, and have them talking from different angles. With a full script, I had the discipline of knowing I could not draw them saying anything, because I knew they had to be saying *exactly* what the writer put in. But it gave me the knowledge suddenly of choreographing all the restrictions possible and still trying to make it as much *my* visuals as possible.

It worked well. Gerry, like most of the writers I've worked with—to a degree which I'm flattered by—thinks that I'm wasted on a full script because I like to think my stories out. I like the freedom where, if they give me something, I want to toss them something that will surprise them. Recently I did a page for Marv in which I sat there—for fifteen minutes, just looking at blank paper, trying to design it. Sometimes even I will have to stop myself, just so one page does not seem like another. I refuse to have the same panel layout one page after another. I consciously make sure that if I have three panels on the top tier, there'll be two on the next one, or the tier size will be different on the next page. It has to balance out—I can't let the page look boring. Sometimes I will go even more bizarre by ignoring the restrictions of straight panel formation and work the whole page into a design. I did three montages in the *"Cyborg"* story for the mini-series. I scarcely ever do montages, but this was a story that demanded some kind of special treatment; also, the story was realistic, because it deals both with Hell's Kitchen and with his private life with his parents, and so required a realistic approach—yet it had to be visually interesting. It gave me yet again another challenge. The more challenges Marv tosses at me—at first, I'm intimidated, saying, "How can he expect me to draw this"; when Len gave me Grand Central Station, my first response was anger (laughs). "What the hell is this?" Just once I'd like to get a simple story. *AVENGERS #200* should've been just Jarvis sitting in the middle of the desert, thinking. No backgrounds, just him sitting there thinking. (Laughter) That would've been something nobody expected from me.

But the *TITANS* is a perfect team book for me. I haven't enjoyed any series as much as I've enjoyed the *"Titans."* I think the reason my popularity seems to have grown is the fact that people seem to recognize the fact that I am enjoying myself. Marv is enjoying himself. Marv's work on the *"Titans"* is the best super-hero work he's ever done. He's never been all that satisfied with his super-hero work, but I think he's finally found the series for which he will always be remembered, as far as his super-hero work goes. His *"Dracula"* work was classic, just because of strong writing.

HOWELL: Speaking of which: In a previous interview, you thought that Gene Colan on *"Dracula"* and Curt Swan on *"Superman"* had undermined their long-term popularity by turning out fantastic work issue after issue.

PEREZ: Uh-huh. The thing about Curt—Curt, unfortunately, is an incredible draftsman, yet he's not all that

"Marv's work on the TITANS is the best work he's ever done."

TITANS
SOMETHING'S GOING TO HAPPEN!
THE STRANGE POWER OF THE MARTIAN MANHUNTER!
THE STRANGE POWER OF THE MARTIAN MANHUNTER!

exciting a story-teller, and never has been. It's like getting Normal Rockwell—and I *love* Norman Rockwell's work and admire him greatly. But it would *not* work in a comic book. His work is very sedate, and when you're dealing with a character bigger than life, like Superman, then I think Superman's popularity gets affected by the fact that he is never treated as a *super man*. He looks like a chunkily built, muscular man. He's usually battling petty crooks, and he never gets something worth his mettle. But even Curt can surprise me. In fact, I had grown a little jaded: "Okay, he produces good work, but there's nothing exciting about it." Then Marv had written up a story which had Superman battling Brainiac in outer space. I've seen the pencils for that, and they are *phenomenal*. Curt did a splash page which I probably would have shuddered to do. (Howell laughs) I mean, he had an interior mechanism inside a spaceship, with Superman just a tiny thing flying through it—it encompassed the entire page, and it was *gorgeous*! Curt can deliver a little more dynamic story if given the opportunity.

I think in the case of Gene—Gene is such a stylized artist that he produced good work, but he was also on a series where his strengths were best used. The series was a popular series, but still, it was a horror series. Gene suffers, in my opinion, a little trouble in diversifying. There's only a few series that Gene can do well, because of his style being so, so far removed from most others. He's a wonderful draftsman, produces brilliant work, but if you only see him on that one book, all the time, you start losing your appreciation. I bought a portfolio of Alphonse Mucha, whom I love. But after a while, after looking at it a number of times, you do get a little jaded, because obviously it does repeat formulas—which is part of his style. To look at it all in one large bulk, and seeing him doing basically the same thing, he does the same type of posters, you'd love to see him—what would he do on a landscape? That type of thing. To see what he would have done if he stretched a bit. It boggles the mind to even think about a Mucha landscape—that is really weird. (Laughs)

KALISH: He's done that, actually—a Czechoslovakian epic.

PEREZ: That would not surprise me. I haven't seen it.

KALISH: It's his ultimate masterpiece, which was never published.

PEREZ: See? Figures. (Laughter)

But Marv is working with Gene on a new series...

HOWELL: "The Dark Force."

PEREZ: Is that the name of it?

HOWELL: It is this week. [Most recently, it was named *"Night Force."*]

PEREZ: Whatever the name will be on the finished product, I don't know. He's trying to get Gene revitalized, because he was wrong for the *"Avengers,"* he's not made for a straight super-hero job. I don't believe he's enjoying *"Wonder Woman"*...

HOWELL: I heard that.

PEREZ: So it's a type of thing that he is limited in his range because of the things that he likes to do and that he can do really well. He did solely *"Dracula"* for so long that it wasn't until *"Howard the Duck"* that people started going, "Hey, this is *Gene Colan,"* because he was doing something different. It's partially the fact that when you're so good, they start taking you for granted. They expect a good job from Gene, and only start making criticism when he does something wrong. After a while, you want a little more compliment than, "Oh, he did his usual job," you know? I think with this new series Gene will start revitalizing himself again. I don't think he was happy during his last couple years at Marvel, and right now, he's getting back into it—his *"Batman"* is interesting. I think he really likes to to get back down to the old gothic stuff, which he does so well, and he really enjoys doing. I've seen some of the production work he's done for the new series, and it's gorgeous. Really. He's even paying attention to things like —he usually draws women's hair a certain way, and his

wife made a comment, so he gave that woman character a "perm" to make her look a little more "now." (Laughter) He actually redesigned a woman's hairstyle just for a little contemporary look. Well, I admire anyone who is at least willing to say, "Okay, I've got to adjust."

HOWELL: So you don't think you're in any danger of falling into a similar trap?

PEREZ: Well, the one time I fell into it, which the Titans has helped me get out of, is that I was considered a "power" artist, and one who lacked any kind of subtlety in the artwork. Because of the nature of the series, and particularly after issue #8 of the *TITANS*, where Marv dared

and succeeded in doing a story where very little actually takes place, and did require the subtleties of one-on-one relationships, or just a little turn of the mouth or raising of the eyebrows to show what was going on in the drawing. I started learning more about the subtleties of characters, and now I've developed a subtlety in my approach to a story that was not there before. That was the rut I was in.

HOWELL: Do you date that development from that issue?

PEREZ: I was making a conscious effort mostly because of a comment that John Byrne had made about my style. He was right, and I had overheard a conversation—

HOWELL: PRINTED?

PEREZ: I don't believe it was printed; it was just the type of thing where we were comparing styles. John was a more subtle style, and he's developed into a more dynamic style since, and mine was a very dynamic style, and I've developed subtlety since. John and I are mutual admirers; we admire each other's work, and we learn from each other. John's done things based on the types of things I would do, and I would learn from his work as well. We intend to pick from each other, we pick up from Frank Miller, some of the older pros like Kane, Kirby, Adams, all the others—Starlin is probably the last really strong influence I had as far as a major influence that affected the look of my work.

But, in issue #8, it became my first opportunity to use it. I had tried not to have the characters look so posed, to have them more relaxed. Not looking like their legs are eight feet apart. Just trying to treat them as human beings, bigger than life, but still rather human. You start losing sympathy for a character if you can't identify with him. There's no sympathy without empathy of some sort.

So I was determined to get it down, and even Jim Shooter at one point made the comment that—he was talking about assigning artists for certain books. He was saying, "If you want a book to get slam-bang action, get George Perez." Now, that was very flattering; obviously, that was the Marvel style. But I did want to get to the point where that wasn't the only thing I could do, that, given a story that requires just quiet relationships, that I can handle it, and I made a certain effort to do so.

I'm learning more as I do it, because these stories that Marv is giving me require me to be more subtle. But that was the one thing where I was really falling into a rut. My characters were too big—they were just big, bulky characters going into big action moves; none of them really had any real grace. They tended to be very muscle-bound and very stocky. I just wanted to put a little grace into the characters.

HOWELL: And you say this is coming primarily from John Byrne?

PEREZ: Well, John is an influence because of the way he draws. There are a number of persons who have commented on the differences between John and myself, just the fact that John had a much more subtle approach, and my characters were big, brawny, but tended to lack grace. Those critiques were not from John, but from people who compared John and me. There were some criticisms that I didn't agree with, and some that I did. That was one of them. I definitely did need more subtlety in my work. Comics were growing to the point where stories were not just one fistfight after another. It had to be the type where the characters mattered. Now I've got a book where I really care about the characters, where I know

EARTH 1
WHAT ARE THE RUMORS THAT THE UNDERWORLD CONSPIRED TO KILL BATMAN CITY TELL ABOUT THIS MAN?
SOME SAY HE ISN'T QUITE HUMAN—
—OR THAT, IF HE IS, HE IS VERY HUMAN INDEED.
EARTH 1
HE IS, SURELY A MAN CAST-DESIGNED AS AN EARTH MARSHAL.
TONIGHT, THIS MISSION BRINGS HIM TO THE METROPOLIS POINT, AN ANCIENT BATHHOUSE, A BUILDING IN SILVER AGE DECADENCE.

every inch of those characters. That has given me the ability to say, "Okay, let's have this guy just sit down for a cup of coffee. Not *grab* a cup of coffee; he can just hold it. Study the way hands are done." A person who does it magnificently is Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez. Very naturalistic poses; the characters don't tend to look posed. I tried to adapt that, which—being at DC probably helped me get it faster, because DC *did* have a quieter style. Now, they're starting to get into slam-bang, because they're getting so many Marvel artists into the company now, so they have the big action series.

HOWELL: They still have the basis of...

PEREZ: Oh, sure, right—they still have Curt Swan; Curt Swan could never survive at Marvel, but he thrives at DC.

"When you let the ego get the best of you, there's absolutely no way the product will benefit, because suddenly you're thinking of your own satisfaction and you're forgetting about the finished book."

HOWELL: Most of the *"Superman"* artists of the 1960s are that sort.

PEREZ: Right. Very staid, very relaxed.

I think a lot of that also has to do with the writers. The writers have to put a little more imagination into *"Superman,"* into remembering that this is a character who has powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men (laughs), and give him a little bigger-than-life story. Sometimes it gets a little tiring seeing him battle nothing but petty crooks. *"Superman"* is a quiet series, but there should at least be some chances where the story should take off. When I got the *"Superman/Omac"* story, I was determined it was going to be a straight action story. Subtleties to the wind. The *"Superman/Omac"* story is a straight action story. The story was supposed to be 17 pages long, and I asked for 25 pages, just so I could do an eight-page fight scene between Superman and a character called Murder-Mech in Metropolis Grand Central Station—picking up trains, going through walls, Superman using his heat vision with high intensity so his whole face falls into shadow, I mean—THINGS I want to do with Superman at least once—which I think other artists can do if given a chance to do. Len has always wanted to do that type of story, so I got a chance to do it. I think if more writers give Superman his due as an incredibly powerful god-like character, I think they can produce some very, very fascinating stories, although, because of the nature of the character, I wouldn't want that to be a steady diet. Also, he's a father figure. You can't make him a belligerent bully (laughs) all the time.

KALISH: It sounds like you have your own very strong ideas on what to do with a lot of the characters you grew up with...

PEREZ: Mm-hmm...

KALISH: Have you ever been inclined to write your own series? Take on the responsibilities of being a writer/artist?

PEREZ: Well, I know I can write decently; I've never written a comic, obviously, except for many moons back during my fan days. I really want to become a superior artist, but I don't want to take a chance at being a mediocre writer. I admire writers, and any person who can be both writer and artist—*when they can do it*—fine. I have incredible admiration for them: Frank Miller in particular, and a number of others. But I myself feel like I'm more of an idea person. I can suggest dialogue from bandying it back and forth with Marv, and I can suggest bits and pieces of dialogue, but I respect the writers that I want to work with to the point where I want *them* to do it—I trust them. I want the *best* writer to do the *best* dialogue, rather than a good artist doing mediocre dialogue. I just don't feel comfortable enough. I feel like I can write; I just don't think I can write comics. I don't think I have the ability that seems necessary to be able to know how much dialogue has to be limited. Obviously, as an artist, I'd limit dialogue to one little balloon, and get all my artwork in there! It's a tough thing. I wouldn't know how to compromise, so I'd rather have someone take what I do and amplify it, and allow me the give-and-take. Marv has asked me why I've never written before. He asked if I would like to write a *"Titans"* story or maybe a back-up story dealing with one of the characters, particularly Cyborg. And flattered as I was by that, I still like Marv's writing. Marv has taken that book that everyone laughed at (when we said we were going to do the *"Titans"*) and actually made it a respected book.

If I were going to be a writer, I'd rather it be in the alternative press, where I can be a little more self-indulgent. There is going to be more discipline in a comic because you have steady characters. And you can't afford the self-indulgences that some writers can do if they forget the fact that they're working at a business, not just something to stroke their own egos.

KALISH: It seems, though, that when you're speaking of writing, you're speaking almost entirely of dialoguing. How does that affect your feelings about, say, plotting?

PEREZ: Oh, plotting, I...

KALISH: You're the co-plotter of...

PEREZ: Oh yes. I'm the co-plotter and I've plotted certain sequences on my own. I enjoy plotting; I consider myself a good *idea* man. It is the dialogue that I feel I would be a little weak on. I have the ear for it, but it's very hard for me just to pick up, from my sub-conscious or conscious or whatever, how different people are going to talk. I can hear it in a person's voice, but I can't create it. So I consider myself a good idea man, which is why most writers would insist on just giving me plots. Let me use my ideas, create what I want, make suggestions for what I want, but in the long run, it comes to the actual finished product, the description, the prose, the purple adjectives that are so prevalent (laughter) in these stories, I prefer someone who's really good at it. I would feel really self-conscious at it. Sometimes the purple prose of a comic book sounds so unrealistic, it's pure corn, let's face it, (Laughter) It has to be. That's the nature of the medium—we draw bigger than life, so we have to write bigger than life. I keep feeling self-conscious about it—I think, "My God, if I keep writing like that, I'm going to talk like that soon." (Laughter)

KALISH: A fate worse than death...

PEREZ: Yeah (laughs). Could you imagine someone talking, "Oh woe, oh woe is me, my life is nothing but an empty vessel now." I just don't want to go spouting Thor and Raven dialogue the rest of my life. Raven always amazed me, how she could talk like that (laughs).

KALISH: It probably amazes everyone else she meets, too.

PEREZ: True, yeah. "What the *hell* is she saying?" (Laughter)

KALISH: There's a scene in the *TEEN TITANS* that just came out—#16—where Raven is at college for the first time. She stands up and says, "Oh, but I prattle. But—I'm still prattling. Maybe I should sit down." (Laughter) And she is—she's prattling.

PEREZ: That's right. And I admire Marv—by saying it, it's quite evident—no one buys this dialogue here (laughter). "Why is she talking"—we've gotten letters saying, *"If* she calls Wally 'Wallace' one more time, I'm gonna *puke!"* That's the nature of the character.

HOWELL: "Garfield..."

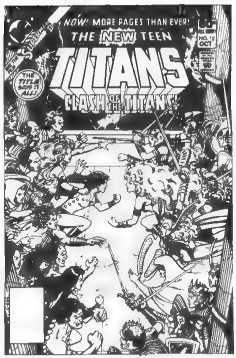
PEREZ: Well, Gar—yeah, Garfield. I keep thinking of that fat cat whenever I hear Garfield's name...

KALISH: All he has to do is turn into one...

PEREZ: Turn into Garfield the cat, yeah. That's the point of the writing—you can do such diverse dialogue. Gar's dialogue is certainly far removed from Raven's dialogue—it's like Marv manages to split his brain into seven characters, which I have to do visually. One thing I wanted to do with the Titans—and I'm proud of the fact that I've gotten a few compliments on it—is that even without the masks, and even if I were to remove the hairlines, you can tell that they're seven individual faces. They each have individual faces. Raven is very angular, very high cheekbones, very straight-nosed, with an upper lip slightly larger than her lower lip, and, of course, an incredibly large forehead. The very round face of Starfire—the eyes give her away (laughs), and slightly more chiseled, square jawed yet softer features for Wonder Girl, for a totally different look. I tried, at one point, drawing their faces side by side, not even drawing their hair, and in the cases of the girls not even drawing their eyes, and I actually had people able to tell who the characters were. And the one that was the biggest challenge, by not putting any highlights on, was to differentiate Robin from Kid Flash. Before, they tended to have the same exact face—I was guilty of it, when I started. I made a point of suddenly drawing in Kid Flash's cheeks—making him angular. If you look at a lot of pictures of—

HOWELL: Joggers?

PEREZ: Mikhail Barishnykov, to give him that very slender look. And, of course, very, very strong legs. The fact is that I'm trying to draw his arms less bulky but keep his legs very muscular. That man must have calves like iron. And Robin's face is more round; Dick Giordano set the standard for what Robin should look like, because he corrects all the artwork (Howell laughs), so—Burt Ward had the perfect face, even though he was a mite on the old side. That roundish face, with that hairstyle. And Gar, I just made him look very young. I made his eyes larger, his nose smaller, and his chin is smaller, so it looks like a weak chin, but it made him look like he was only 16 years old. Suddenly it became a character we can work with—he now looked different enough that if we draw him in certain



reactions, you expect a certain way he'll always react to a situation. He either gets heavy sighs when he sees Starfire, or he has that woeful, wounded-puppy look when he's in sympathy with Cyborg. Of course, Cyborg's the easiest person to worry about—he's the only black member of the group. But I didn't want him to look like just a white man dipped in caramel—I wanted him to look like a black man. I made him bigger than the others, very bulky and all, and finally, I developed the fact that all of them had to have individualized faces. Sarah Simms' is a little different. I try not to make it look like when they take off their masks, each whole face changes, also. I was so guilty of that when I first started in comics. Everyone had the same Steve Rogers face when I first started the *"Avengers."* All these lantern-jawed characters. You put a mask on Thor, and *he* would have been Captain America.

HOWELL: Same for Hawkeye and Yellowjacket?

PEREZ: (Laughs) Yeah. Well, Hawkeye and Captain America were the toughest ones—the only thing that made them look different was that cleft chin, the blond hair—the hair was styled differently. At the time, I still didn't know the subtleties of how to draw a different face. I had stock faces on these guys. Finally, I broke Hawkeye's nose. Figured, "He had been a villain, and all villains have broken noses..."

KALISH: Iron Man probably did it... (Laughter)

PEREZ: Yeah. So I broke Hawkeye's nose just to make him look a little different, give him a harder look than Captain America. That was my first conscious effort at trying to make individual faces for these characters. When you have a book with as many characters as *AVENGERS,* it is not easy. I can't wait to get one issue of *THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES* under my belt, just to see how I can handle all those faces.

HOWELL: There's only 23.

KALISH: 25.

PEREZ: I redesigned the costumes on some of them. And now that Timber Wolf has an ordinary human face, I had to touch it up—because I drew the costume, but I drew his old [actually second] face, which I liked better. Now he has this human, rather dull face.

KALISH: It'll change back. Plastic surgery is miraculous in the 30th century.

PEREZ: That's right—just claw his face apart. Make him really look like he's been under the butcher knife. (Laughs)

HOWELL: That's very possible.

KALISH: You've been speaking mainly of multi-character series, that sort of series where, if you open the closet door, more characters will fall out. Have you ever been attracted by any single character, any solo series?

PEREZ: One character I did, I still have seven pages to go on that, but I did start it about three years ago, is—

KALISH: *"The Black Widow."*

PEREZ: The Black Widow. I really am intrigued by the character, Ralph Macchio wanted to do it, and at the time, Ralph Macchio had not written anything. He wanted to do something with me, and he let me decide on a character. I wanted to do a female character, since I only do team books, to show that I can draw a good female character, although at that time I was still drawing even the women a little too bulky. But I wanted to draw a female character to show that I could do "good girl art" as well as the next man.

And so I just wanted to draw a female protagonist story, in which she herself would be the lead character. Ivan did not appear until the end of the story; Nick Fury was peripheral at best; and she kept going through different men in the story. There were groups of villains, but she kept wiping them out so fast (laughter) that no one stayed on for any length of time. It was one of those things where I got to do a single character. I still have seven pages to go, and they want to use it for *MARVEL FANFARE*, so I have to finish that off. I do have a waiver on my DC contract where I am allowed to finish that story, because that was a prior commitment. I am allowed to finish it.

HOWELL: Did you do four issues of that?

PEREZ: It was only supposed to be one. Then I said, "It's getting too long," and they gave me two issues. I said, "It's getting longer," and they gave me three. So I did it in three. But then they said, "Well, we might want to do it as a mini-series (they were talking about doing mini-series at the time) but that means we'll have to re-do the origin." So now the issue I have to finish is the first issue. I still have to do seven pages of the origin story. It felt really strange; I did issues #2, 3, and 4; now I have to do issue #1. (Laughs) Ah, that's the world of comics—what can I tell you? (Laughter) But when I look at the artwork—they sent me Xeroxes, so I could finish the story—my artwork has changed *radically* since then. Again, the women tend to be very heavy-thighed, very tall, very big-boned—a little too bulky in size. And I can tell that even then I was beginning to be conscious of that. In the first pages of the first issue, she looks heavier than she does in the second issue. And when I do these seven pages, she's going to look like the way I draw women now. It's going to be interesting to see how the inkers manage... Some of it has been inked, in part, by Joe Sinnott, Jack Abel, and Bruce Patterson. They put three totally different inkers on this thing. And, because of time, these last seven pages are only going to be breakdowns—which is all I do anyway—while all the other pages were full pencils. Originally Bob Layton was supposed to ink it, so there were some scenes where Bob Layton was going to put in the backgrounds—and now I don't know if he did or not. So with all these different people whose styles have changed over the years... it's going to be curious to see what a book looks like that has had an actual three-year art history, gestation. Last time I did that was a two-issue *"Man-Wolf"* story in *MARVEL PREMIERE*. I had done it two years ago, and they cancelled the series, and I thought, "Oh, they'll never need *this* story," and then suddenly they said, "We want you to finish it," so they gave me another six months to do it. The first half of the story was two years old, and the last half of the story was six months old. It was really strange seeing how the styles had changed. That one held up a little better, because—what can you do with a Man-Wolf? Really. (Laughter) A man with a wolf's head.

But the women have gone through quite a radical change in my drawing. And I'll be curious to see how they manage to put it together. Also, I figure I'll hold off on it. They put an ad together with my name on it—put the accent on the wrong "e." (Laughs) So I think I shall treat them rough. (Laughs) They went out of their way to put the accent in, but put it on the wrong "e." Those poor guys.

HOWELL: Was your desire to polish up your drawing of women based on a similar impulse—to put more subtlety into the work?

PEREZ: Yeah, basically. It's just the fact that I didn't want—I never want to be satisfied with what I do to the point where I'll never want to improve again. I want to constantly find faults in my work, just so I can improve on them. If I don't feel that this is a growing process, it's going to get very dull after a while. I enjoy drawing immensely; I can't think of anything else I would rather do. There are other hobbies, but drawing is number one. I love drawing comics. I love the imagination involved. But it has to be a growing thing. I cannot be drawing the same way ten years from now. I have to know that I am going to grow, and by making a conscious effort at nit-picking, I think about subtlety. Not as many people probably would notice it unless they were really following the artwork. They probably wouldn't have noticed the changes in the women, which was a very gradual thing. Even I wasn't aware of my problems with it—I had to start getting hard on myself. Things like spotting blacks, I got better at. Putting shadows, which I started doing more consciously, in the last two years. Things that I just want to keep doing. I'm not happy with the way I draw feet; I have to keep improving on that. I've never studied anatomy, so most of the anatomy is faked, but I want to keep a *semblance* of reality. I don't want it to be real anatomy, because then it'll limit the way I can move the body. I want to be able to move the body in totally ridiculous ways, so I need certain amounts of freedom. I can't ever think that I've gone as far as I can go. I have to feel like it's a growing thing. I have to feel, at age 80, that I still have a ways to go.

KALISH: You're largely self-taught.

PEREZ: I'm *totally* self-taught. (Laughs) I never had an art lesson until I broke into the business. Then I got advice from everyone, because I was *terrible*. I look at *"Gulliver*

Jones, Warlord of Mars" from *MONSTERS UNLEASHED #8*—I *cringe* (laughter). The letters we received on that issue, on that story!! The only thing we didn't beat out in the [issue-by-issue popularity] poll was the one-page *inside cover*, because no one thought it was eligible—but I'm sure if they had voted on it, we'd've lost to that, too. Two reprints beat us out! (Laughter) It was *horrible*! I looked at that and cringed and knew full well that if I didn't start making some kind of an effort to improve, I was going to be out on my ear. I was able to see the writing on the wall, because it was at a time when the companies were starting to shrink down. The lines had expanded to the point where they didn't have enough people to handle it. Marvel's black-and-white line was supposed to spotlight their top talent; they were using it basically as a training ground. They weren't getting anywhere with that. It was "sink or swim." I had to put my ego in check, because a lot of young artists starting out tend to think that they know it all. We've learned from the comics, and we have all the knowledge we need. All the basics that the real geniuses of the field know, that they had to learn, we also had to find out about, along with little subtleties that were totally missing. I had no knowledge of perspective. Now I do vanishing points. It's quite obvious that I've since learned a bit about it. My backgrounds were sparse; *that* goes back quite a ways (laughs). The characters all looked incredibly posed. None of them looked like they were realistic. Anatomy was to the point of non-existence. I was drawing lines and no real muscles. No knowledge of how the skull held together the flesh on the face, so I'd draw a face, but there was no real substance to it—no definition, no shadow.

I had to learn all those things. John Romita was one of my earliest critics. Joe Rubinstein. Klaus Janson. Joe was working with Neal at the time; did assistant work for Kalus at the time. Joe was not exactly subtle. He's helped a lot of people because he's not afraid to tell you if you're doing something wrong. He's a talented man; I'm surprised that it took as long as it did to finally get the recognition he has now. Neal Adams was another who told me the things I needed to learn. One thing they told me which I took to heart is that they said, "You're so weak as a penciller, don't try inking until you've improved." So I made a conscious decision that, up until last year, I never inked anything professionally, of any substance, and was not intending to. It wasn't until I felt comfortable enough to study inking a bit that I said, "Okay, now I'm going to ink." I use my own method of inking, most because, being incredibly double-jointed, it's very hard to hold the pen steady. I have very unsteady hands. So I use a fountain pen, and fill it with India ink, and actually manage to make the damn thing work, and use my own way of inking, which at least produces results that people seem to like. It takes me longer because I don't have the correct tools that everyone else uses. Then again, I don't even use a drawing board. Up until I got a mechanical pencil, I was using a simply number two Herald Square (since my mother works at the Board of Education, I get 'em free).

I basically worked very non-professionally. I still do. My work routine is to get up, lie on the couch, get an old blackboard slate as my drawing board, put the paper on it, and start drawing. I turn the TV on, and that's the way I work. I work with the TV on, and lying on my back. It's a totally non-professional air. "This is a pro?!" But it works for me.

I had to develop my own system of working, because I just didn't have the—I don't know whether it's the discipline or just the inclination (laughs) of going to a studio and sitting upright over a drawing board, and draw like a real professional artist. I had to make sure that this thing

SUPERMAN REJOINS
THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES
THE WORLD'S GREATEST SUPER-HEROES!
JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA
"HE'S POSSESSED!"
THE NEW TEEN TITANS
OKAY, LET'S GET IT OVER HERE AND MAKE CERTAIN ABOUT IT.
MEANTIME I'M TEACHIN' DONNA HOW TO FLY THE THING.

"Comics were growing to the point where stories were not just one fistfight after another."

felt like it was still a lark to me. "This isn't serious." I'm earning money for something I've been doing since I was five years old. I'm very lucky. I'll work a lot of hours, but it isn't like this is a job. I have not worked in seven and a half years. (Laughter)

HOWELL: You make a good living, too.

PEREZ: I make a good living at it, too. (Laughter) Boy, what a vagabond I am. These gadabouts.

HOWELL: You have been talking about different things that you think comics need to have, and different ways that you'd like to see characters treated once in a while. You must have a pretty solid idea of what makes a good, saleable comic that'll please an editor and the writer.

PEREZ: Well, despite all my opinions, one thing I am conscious enough to know is that what I like isn't what everyone else is going to like. I have thoughts of things that I would like to do that I know full well would probably doom a comic to an early death or just the fact that it is a self-indulgent dream—something I would love to see but not necessarily is a right opinion. I am not so egotistical that I think that everything *I* think a comic should be is what a comic should be. I've learned, through a lot of experience, that when I thought something went right, the sales figures proved me wrong. I've learned to compromise.

Okay, there are some things which I enjoy doing. If I draw Batman, I always want to keep that "creature of the night" thing. I try so hard that, even when he was in a crowd scene, where he was with the rest of the Justice League of America, that I would keep him draped in his cape and seeming to be aloof. Even if he had dialogue, that's the way I felt he should be done. If he were done that way all the time, he would become a totally unsympathetic character. Marshall Rogers treated him as a dark vigilante of the night, again using that air of mystery. Those books didn't sell that well. That were popular among limited circles; the companies cannot make a living on that circle.

So there are some things I would like to do, some things I figure might be good. One thing we're thinking of doing is a *"Titans"* story spotlighting Robin, doing it like a Philip Marlowe story, in which he's trying to find Wonder Girl's parents. Doing it first-person narration, doing all the shadow bits, even doing almost a pulp-like cover, with Robin in an alleyway, maybe holding on to Wonder Girl, or some damsel in distress that'll be in the story—a typical Philip Marlowe type thing, which is a self-indulgent dream. It is something which I really want to do. Len's okayed it; Marv's okayed it. They definitely want to do it. A steady diet of that would kill the book (laughs), because it's *not* Robin. It's part of Robin's nature, but not *all* of Robin's nature.

And there are other things that I wanted to do. I wanted to do a story with the Titans out west. The Titans wouldn't work out west; I just wanted to do a western thing. (They just did it with the JLA anyway.) But I just wanted to do something in the west. When I think about it, the story would not work with Raven there. In fact, we'd have one person with a half-metal face, one guy with green skin, one person who looks totally lost because she never wears anything except that long slit dress, and, of course, a girl with hair like a giant lion's mane and green eyes—you couldn't ever make them conspicuous enough that they can look in wonder at the wild west characters, when it's going to be the wild west characters looking at *them*. I wanted them to be inconspicuous until it was time for them to get into action, but it's *impossible* to do that with those characters. So it's just one of those dreams that didn't work.

There were some times where I just had an idea for a cover, and hoped that somebody would think of a story where I could get to use that cover. (Laughs) I thought of one cover idea where the scene is a cemetery—you know, gnarled trees and twisted decay—and, on the tombstones scattered about, are the names of all the Titans save Robin. And Robin is standing totally in tatters at this point, and standing in the distance—like the opening scenes in *GUNSMOKE*—you can see the arm and the leg of the Terminator, saying, "Okay, Robin, I've terminated the others. You're the last one." And I said, *"I wish* I could do a story based on this! The idea of just being able to draw the cover. The story be damned—I just want to draw the cover!" Marv is thinking on how we're going to handle a story like that now. (Laughter) Because we're thinking, "The next time we introduce the Terminator, let's actually defeat the guy. He's managed to make a fool of the Titans both times he's shown up. He's appeared twice, also, and never once has he been shown fully on the cover. (Laughs) One of the better villains and he's never appeared on the covers. I've got a lot of ideas on what I want, but a lot of them are just little pet things. Every fan—there's still a lot of the fan in me—has pet ideas. There's one fan I know—she's obsessed with who the characters are going to marry in their later lives, and what kinds of offspring will they have? Now, as interesting as that is to think about, it has absolutely nothing to do with the reality of the books we're doing now.

So we all have those strange things. Some things I'm sure I might be able to do eventually. I want to do a *"Batman"* story; I want to do a nice, mysterious *"Batman"* story where I can have that man as the dark-shadowed detective that he is. Mostly because I want to do a story where I can work with shadows a lot. For him, it can work. Even Batman has the fact that it can't be too somber too long, or the character just becomes boring. I definitely know that my ideas will not save a company. Not all of them, anyway. (Laughs) I can very well kill a company with some of the ideas.

HOWELL: So you think there's room for other types of books than the ones you like, and there's room for compromise.

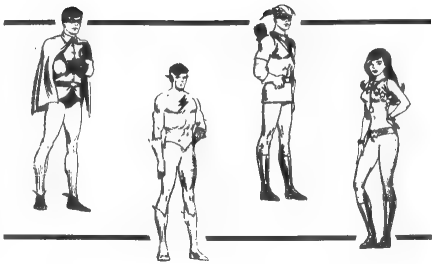
PEREZ: Oh, definitely. In any job, where you're working with more than just one creative person, particularly when you're thinking that these are all artists—you know the artists' temperaments—there's *got* to be room to compromise. When you let the ego get the best of you, there's absolutely no way the product will benefit, because suddenly you're thinking of your own satisfaction and you're forgetting about the finished book. Whatever I do in any comic, the most important thing is what that book looks like when it comes out. I have complained when I didn't

like the way something was inked, or the way it was plotted—usually, I would talk to the inker, or the plotter, and try and see if they would change it. There's one habit that I'm trying to talk the colorists out of—that if they draw the characters in civilian clothing, the clothing doesn't always have to be the same color as their uniforms. You know—little subtleties. They don't agree, and they give me a good opinion, and I bow down to that opinion. And, despite everything, Len Wein is my editor, and he's my boss, and his decision goes, no matter what. If I don't agree with what Len says, that's tough. I am working for him; he's not working for me. Luckily, it's not that type of situation where he would bully or exercise his authority to the point of being inflexible, but it is the type of thing where I've got to remember that, no matter what *I* do, the most important thing is that the book be the best it can be.

POSSESSED? IF IT, THOSE ONLY HAPPEN CHEAP MOVIES
I FEEL SO SORRY FOR FRAN. I DON'T THINK THERE'S A MIL-METER OF HER THAT HASN'T BEEN PROBED, SCRAPED, PINCHED, OR PRICKED.
I DUNNO. ANYONE WHO LOOKS LIKE THAT COULD SURE POSSESS ME.

"I am not so egotistical that I think that everything I think a comic should be is what a comic should be."

Fans of DC's mega-favorite, **THE NEW TEEN TITANS**, are likely to be interested in accumulating back issues of the initial run of the series, as well as following the monthly adventures of the team. However, knowing what to look for in the back-issue bins could prove confusing to would-be Titans historians, because like its opposite number at Marvel, **THE (NEW) X-MEN**, **THE NEW TEEN TITANS** is very different from the series that spawned it. The original **TEEN TITANS**, too, went through a lot of changes, so it would be very difficult to describe the character of the series as a whole. So, for those fans who would like to know more of what went before, I offer this overview of the series, to familiarize you with the high points, low points, and whatever



"There were Titans in those days . . ." by David Kirk

TEEN TITANS

else might be of interest in the original **TEEN TITANS**.

The Teen Titans is often referred to as a "Junior Justice League," and with good reason, since that's precisely what the team started out as. Robin, Kid Flash, and Aqualad, all side-kicks of Justice League members, teamed up for the first time in **THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD #54**, and they adopted the name Teen Titans (and added fourth charter member Wonder Girl) in their second appearance in **B&B**#60. Thus, they were essentially a team composed of midget versions of Batman, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, and The Flash, which is all but one of the teenaged, JLA-doppelgangers available, and the last, Green. Arrow's protege Speedy, guest-starred early on in the series (#4), and joined the team (if unofficially) in #19. The only other teen superhero to show up in the first twenty issues of **TEEN TITANS** was Beast Boy (now known as the Changeling), kid sidekick of the Doom Patrol,so he certainly fit the mold.

The Teen Titans did not duplicate the atmosphere of The Justice League on a smaller scale, however. Superman, Green Lantern, and Hawkman do not have any kid side-kicks, and without them, the Teen Titans not only did not have the cosmic emphasis afforded by these outer space heroes, but they did not have the power and popularity of a caped Kryptonian in their ranks. Thus, the team was considerably more down-to-Earth than the JLA. Not only that, but the teen aspect of the book was played up by dint of having the stories center around teen problems and teen concerns.

This emphasis was established in the very first story, in which the Hatton Corners Teen Club asks Robin, Kid Flash, and Aqua lad to help them in their dispute with the town's adults over a new clubhouse. Before they arrive, however, all the teen-agers are kidnapped by the villainous Mr. Twister, as hostages in a plan for vengeance against the town's adults. During the course of the story, not only do Robin & Friends prove that teenagers can be as capable as adults (by defeating Twister when the adults couldn't), but the enforced separation of the teens and adults made each group realize good points about the other, and so their reunion is harmonious and their differences get solved. To be sure, this is a very simplistic treatment of a fairly complex problem, but at least it gave the "side-kick team -up" a distinctive identity. If they were going to be a teen team, they were going to get involved in teen stories — and that they certainly did. By the time the Teen Titans received their own magazine, they had not only helped the Hattan Corners Teen Club, but also aided the teens of Midville, when their town's annual Teen Government Day ran into super-villain trouble (and, of course, the dreaded Generation Gap), and saved a famous teeny-bopper rock group who were being framed for a series of robberies. In their own magazine, they ran up against teenage peer rejection, high school dropouts, parental pressure, and youthful runaways, among others. When they were not directly addressing teen problems, the Titans still found themselves in youth-oriented stories. Rock and roll, fashion fads, teenage athletics, school, and other elements that would be familiar to the magazine's teenaged and pre-teen audience continually found their way into the stories.

THAT RUNAWAY MATTHEWS KID IS GONE!
HE MUST'VE SLIPPED AWAY IN THE CONFUSION! WE'LL HELP YOU FIND HIM, OFFICER--THAT BOY'S IN TROUBLE... BIG TROUBLE!
YOU SPEAK THE TRUTH, BOY WONDER! LOTS OF KIDS AROUND HERE ARE IN A CRIME BAG...SOMEBODY'S TURNING THEM ON TO UNCOOL ACTIVITIES!
EDDIE'S RIGHT! SOMEBODY'S RUNNING A CRIME RING IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD!--PASSING STOLEN GOODS, FENCING FOR BIG-TIME HOODLUMS, SWIPING CARS...AND USING RUNAWAY TEENAGERS AS STOOGES! IF ONLY WE COULD FIND WHO'S BEHIND IT--!

With all this "real-life teen concerns" stuff in the series, one might suspect that it was stultifyingly "relevant," like the Denny O'Neil/Neal Adams **GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROWs**. But rather than the teenage connection being the heart and soul of the book, it was grist for the writer's mill, raw material from which entertaining stories could be crafted. The approach was a light-hearted one, with the accent as much or more on the adventure than on the social issues brought up. More often than not, the seriousness of the themes would be completely undercut by the fact that the villains of the piece were humorous, if not downright ridiculous. In addition to Mr. Twister (who was a scruffy old coot in colonial dress, with a cape of feathers and a mystic Indian staff), The Titans' Rogues Gallery featured such eminent members as The Mad Mod, criminal haberdasher to the stars, and Big Daddy Ding Dong, an overweight beatnik in the business of supplying super-charged dragsters to criminal groups. Nevertheless, for all Big Daddy Ding Dong's silliness, it was the fact that he was encouraging local high school students to drop out and work at his garage that brought the Titans onto the case. So while the stories would not knock the reader over the head with their relevance, neither would they lose their teenaged emphasis in an effort to be funny.

The scripts for these stories were provided by Bob Haney, a very professional, versatile writer. Whether he is writing **THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD**, **AQUAMAN**, **TEEN TITANS**, or **THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER**, Haney always works within the requirements of the particular series, and produces well-crafted stories. In **TEEN TITANS** especially, Haney demonstrated his command over his craft while dealing with peculiar elements. The teen aspects of the series, as well as the humor aspects had to be balanced within a complete

ACTION STATIONS, GANG! SPEEDY! FLASHER! SEE ABOUT REFUNDS FOR THESE KIDS! WONDER GAL...YOU AND I ARE ABOUT TO ENTER SHOW BIZ!
CHECK, ROBIN!
INTRODUCING...
SHE'S A DOLL!
HEY--! WHO'S THAT?
...THE SAME OLD LOVABLE WONDER CHICK--IN A BRAND NEW WRAPPING!
DIG THE GROOVY NEW THREADS!
IS--IS THAT--WONDER GIRL?

HOLY THIMBLES, IT'S THE MAD MOD
LET'S GO, TITANS!
AYE, ME DUCKIES, IT'S YOUR OLD FRIEND, AND NOW YOU'VE SEEN THE LIVIN' LAST O' ME AND THE RUDDY SCEPTRE!
CHEERIO!

story, something Haney did quite well. There was always a lot of plot in a Haney **TEEN TITANS** adventure, and while some comics readers don't care for the sort of silliness Haney put the titans through, they'd find it hard to fault his story construction. Whether he was dealing with treason at the Olympics, unthawed cave-boys, or rock 'n' roll deejays in orbit, Haney delivered an interesting story.

As the Titans' series reached the teens itself, Haney began to get somewhat carried away with the silliness. "Teentalk," a sort of post-pubescent version of the Mort Weisinger "baby-talk" that shows up in all Superbaby stories, began to take over the magazine. Earlier, this "hep-cat lingo" had shown up every now and then, to establish the youth of the protagonists, and to make them seem a little more human (DC side-kicks, with the exception of Snapper Carr, were almost as blandly "straight" in the 1960s as their adult counterparts, and if Haney had stuck with their established speech patterns, his modern teen team would have seemed like they walked straight out of **FATHER KNOWS BEST**). Still, the preponderance of the "teentalk" in **TEEN TITANS** did make it seem like these characters were speaking another language. In case you've never encountered this dialect, here are a few examples: "Check, Twinkletoes... he's really got the cold and clammies!" "Yikes! I'm like running on a treadmill to nowher!" "Excuses, excuses! That's all a girl gets these days! This is the love-in generation and I'm being left out!" "Wow! Cavernsville... Large style!" Still, for all that The Titans were showing less and less connection with the real world, the stories were terrific, provided you could accept their goofiness. Some of the absolute best Titans stories showed up during this period. #24's **"Skis of Death"** features a three-way conflict between a young Indian entrepreneur trying to run a ski resort, a more tradition-minded Indian who wants to drive off business and keep the mountain slopes pure for the sacred rituals, and an unscrupulous type who wants to gain title to the land by fraud, so he can sell it to the government as a missile site. The Titans stumble smack into the middle of it, and in the process, liven up the story with some of the best "teentalk" ever to come off the typewriter of Bob Haney. The issue's two best examples both come from Wonder Girl: "Umm — he's dreamy! He can wax my slats anytime!!" and "Merciful Minerva!' That wagon wheel — it'll freak out those shing-a-ling lovers — like forever — unless I can do my own thing — like fast!" There are those who find this sort of dialogue abhorrent, but if you approach it with the right frame of mind, its very perversity gives it a strange sort of appeal. It's impossible to take seriously, but nobody could ever mean it to be.

To my mind, the very best **TEEN TITANS** story appeared in this period, and demonstrates an off-the-wall ludicrousness that should earn it some sort of place in a comics hall of fame. **"The Dimensional Caper,"** in #16, centers around a high school that exists simultaneously in two dimensions. In our dimension, it's a normal high school, but in the other, it's overrun by an army of nasty green aliens intent on conquering Earth through the dimensional warp afforded by the school. One student, Chet Walters, unknowingly finds the dimensional warp and discovers the alien army. When he returns, he tries to warn our world of the coming invasion, but everyone just thinks he's a kook. His parents try to get him to see a psychiatrist, and his friends reject him. The only ones who will even check his story out are (naturally) the Teen Titans, and they manage to destroy the warp forever, in a bizarre battle during which the school, the army, the students, teachers, and Titans keep popping back and forth across the warp uncontrollably. It's a story that really has to be seen to be believed.

Aside from Bob Haney and his odd-ball inventiveness, one of the major factors responsible for the quality of these Titans issues is the art of Nick Cardy. Cardy, one of the most versatile and innovative comics artists of the late 1960s, is virtually unknown today, perhaps due to the fact that when he left comics he did not produce any limited edition prints, portfolios, or any other comics-related items, like so many of the "past greats" that we hear so much about today. Cardy's dramatic work is much in evidence in the first thirty-nine **AQUAMAN**s, and his distinctive humor work made **BAT LASH** a series to remember. His early work on the Titans (he began drawing the series before #1) is marked by a very simple layout style, excellent figure work, and a rough brush rendering with which he seemed to be able to draw anything the story might require (and the stories required plenty) with ease. As the series wore on, he began experimenting with his art, trying different methods of expressive cartooning, dramatic lighting, and all manner of story-telling approaches. This resulted in some very varied, but always excellent artwork on the series. That Cardy no longer does any comics work is a great loss to the industry, though not to Cardy — reports are that he's making big money in advertising art, and doesn't even like to hear comic books mentioned.

SO HOW DO WE DO THAT, GENIUS? GO AROUND AND RING DOOR BELLS-? ANYBODY SEEING US COMING WILL GO UNDERGROUND..!
BELLS.. UNDERGROUND... YOU'VE HIT IT, GILLHEAD! STAND BY, TEAM, FOR "OPERATION THE MOST!"
NUH?
JINGLE JINGLE
SO, DEAR HEARTS, FOR KEN IT LOOKS PRETTY BAD--WHERE'S OUR RUNAWAY NOW... WHY, IN HIS CHICK'S PAD--!"
KARI N, BABY, THIS IS A BAD BIG! BOTH THE TITANS AND THE FUZZ ARE LOOKING FOR ME!
OH, KENNY, I'M SCARED! MAYBE YOU SHOULD CALL YOUR PARENTS FOR HELP!

The "hep-cat lingo" could sometimes get out of hand. But the stories were, for the most part, good. TT 24 "Skis of Death" was one of the best.

Other than Cardy, **TEEN TITANS** also featured some excellent artwork by Neal Adams and Gil Kane, in issues #19-24. Cardy inked all but one of these, which kept a feeling of continuity in the art (much like some of the early issues, which Cardy inked over Irv Novick's pencils), and the odd collaboration between Adams and Cardy in #20-22 makes those issues items of interest for Adams collectors. If you are an art fan, almost any issue between #10 and #30 will prove quite satisfying.

With issue #25, **TEEN TITANS** went through a major change that altered the flavor of the series completely. With Robert Kanigher taking over the writer's job, **TEEN TITANS** retained its youth orientation, but became a very serious book. The Titans attended a peace rally, during which a riot broke out. As the Titans struggled with one of the militants, his gun went off, and fatally shot Dr. Arthur Swenson, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, and crusader for world harmony. The Titans, feeling responsible, vowed never to use their powers again, and joined a top secret project run by a Mr. Jupiter, the world's richest philanthropist. The team was no longer a junior Justice League, either. The Hawk and the Dove, who had guest-starred in #21, joined the team with the "big change" story, as did a young psychic name Lilith. Aqualad had been on leave since #19, and Robin had not been with the team at the peace rally, and so was not part of the vow or Mr. Jupiter's project. Those in the project threw out their costumes in favor of light purple jumpsuits, to further demonstrate the break with their old ways.

Whether these changes were advisable is questionable. Considering that one of the appeals of the series was the chance to see the kid side-kicks on their own, away from their adult mentors, the introduction of Mr. Jupiter as a father figure was unwise. For those who had adult mentors already, he was redundant, and for those who didn't, he robbed them of their initiative. One of the characteristics central to the Hawk and the Dove's concept was their efforts to find out what to do, how to act, with their natures in opposition. But with Mr. Jupiter calling the shots, they became little more than a surly boy and a wimpy boy arguing about whether or not to hit people. The uniforms were pretty boring, too, and made it difficult to tell the team members apart.

The new direction collapsed into mush almost immediately, as the returning Aqualad convinced them to put their costumes back on for one mission, at the end of which they decided

THAT EXPLAINS WHERE THOSE WATER POLO PLAYERS WENT! WHAT DO WE DO NOW, ROBIN?
WE TRY TO SOMEHOW KEEP THOSE DIMENSION CHARACTERS ON THEIR SIDE OF THE WARP BEFORE THEY HARM ANYBODY ON OUR SIDE! SAY, WHERE'S CHET?
HAVEN'T SEEN HIM!
WE MUST'VE LOST HIM--!
THE MACHINE! IT'S THE ANSWER! WE'VE GOT TO GET TO IT! LET'S GO!

BUT AS THE TITANS RACE TOWARD THE LAB--
YOU IMPUDENT BOY! YOU ARE FIGHTING IN A LOST CAUSE--! YOU--THOSE INTERFERING TITANS--ALL HUMANS--ARE DOOMED TO BE CONQUERED BY US--!
NOT IF...I...CAN HELP IT, BUSTER!

AS THE RAY PISTOL FIRES INTO THE COMPLICATED MECHANISM -- DESTROYING IT...
THOSE FOOLISH TITANS! THEY RUN UNWINKING INTO OUR WEAPONS! THEY ARE DOOMED!
KEEP GOING, TEAM! WE GOTTA GET TO THE MACHINE!

AND WHEN THE WHIRLING, FLOATING IS OVER...
WOW! THAT WAS TRIBSVILLE! BUT IT SURE GOT RID OF THAT WIPEOUT SQUAD!
WE MUST BE BACK IN OUR OWN DIMENSION, THAT MEANS SOMETHING HAPPENED TO THE MACHINE--COME ON--!

TT 16 demonstrates an off-the-wall ludicrousness that should earn it some sort of place in a comics hall of fame. It was the best TT story of this period.

that they might overlook the vow every now and then, in extreme situations. The uniforms and costumes switched back and forth thereafter, with little rhyme or reason, and their solemn vow faded quickly from sight. They never decided they were wrong, that their powers were in fact better used for good, they just sort of shuffled the vow under the rug. The characters lost whatever impact they might have had as moral paragons or super-heroes, and their indecisiveness made the series seem directionless.

The new scripting didn't help the book any, either. Steve Skeates had assumed the scripting chores after Kanigher's three issues, but neither's stories were nearly as tightly plotted as Haney's. They chose to center around social issues at the cost of plot, and rather than making a dramatic case for some sort of social reform, his stories seemed to limply plead that bad things are wrong. One notable story pointed out another of the major problems with Skeates' stories — they were silly. It **#31's "To Order Is To Destroy"** presented us with a college campus full of zombies. It seems the university psychologist had been advising brain operations as a cure for stress and social consciousness, and slowly but surely had taken over the minds of the entire campus. Haney's ludicrous plot elements were a strength to the series when he was writing it, because his stories were supposed to be funny. But Skeates' were an attempt at serious story-telling, and ridiculous plots like that one made it impossible to take the (usually overtly stated) morals seriously.

The series was still worth watching because of the Cardy art, which continued to be excellent up until #32, at which point George Tuska took over. Most issues thereafter were still inked by Cardy, but Tuska's pencilling just couldn't equal Cardy's.

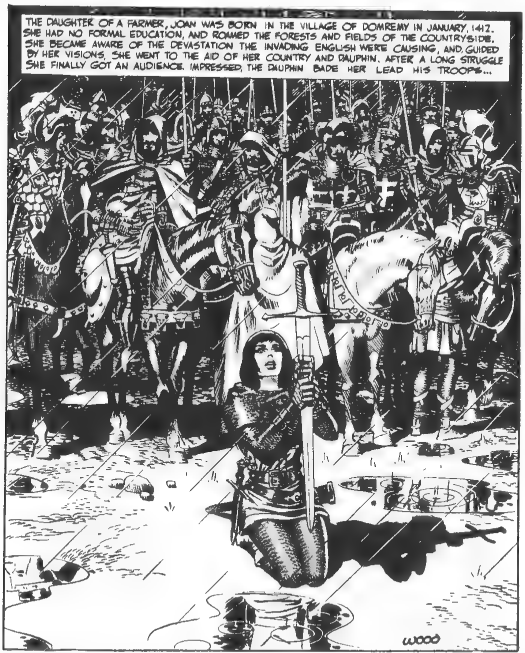
The Skeates approach did not last long. In the middle of a two part story (#32-33), there was an editorial changeover, (with Murray Boltinoff replacing Dick Giordano), and Bob Haney came back to the series as writer. With Haney back, there was a return to tightly-plotted stories, and some unusual ideas, but the series never recovered what it had lost. The decision had been made to steer away from the teeny-bopper humor approach, and try for more serious stories. However, the stories that appeared dealt with such elements as posession, an eerie re-enactment of **Romeo and Juliet**, hidden Indian tribes, the Loch Ness monster, and the fugitive slave railway. It was quite a change from the earlier teen-oriented stories. The only real common denominator that can be found in the series at that point is a recurring emphasis on mysticism, which is not the right sort of material for a team like the Teen Titans. They were a very snappy, modern, American super-team that would have been far more at home with street crime or super-villains than with forbidden crypts and voodoo dolls. The buying audience must have found the material inappropriate, as well, because the series was shortly cancelled, and the first life of the Teen Titans came to an end.

It was quite a varied life while it lasted — few comics series present such diverse approaches over a period of fewer than fifty issues. The Nick Cardy art alone is worth amassing a collection of **TITANS**, and the early issues feature some terrific writing as well. Whether it's history you're after — to back up the new **TITANS** series — or you just want to read some good comics, the original run of the **TEEN TITANS** has plenty to offer.

HORRIFIED, THE TITANS GATHER AROUND THE DYING WORLD CELEBRATED CRUSADER FOR PEACE.
YOUR POWERS...AND CAPACITIES FOR VIOLENCE...CARRY AWFUL RESPONSIBILITIES-- YOU'RE LIKE ATOM BOMBS-- BUT YOU'RE STILL ONLY KIDS-- TEENAGERS-- PERHAPS--
IT'S OUR FAULT! WE DIDN'T MEAN TO-- BUT IN THE STRUGGLE WE ALL HAD A HAND IN PULLING THE TRIGGER!
LATER THE STUNNED GUILT-RIDDEN TITANS WANDER THE STREETS OF THE CITY...
SPECIAL NEWS BULLETIN! DR. ARTHUR SWENSON DIES AT MEDICAL CENTER!
CELEBRATED WINNER OF NOBEL PEACE PRIZE DEAD!
A MODERN SAINT FALLS VICTIM TO VIOLENCE!
AND WE KILLED HIM! WE-- WE'LL NEVER USE OUR SUPER POWERS AGAIN! NEVER!

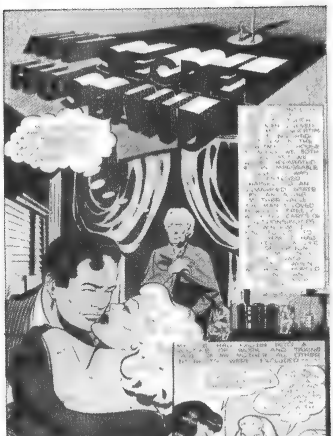
With issue 25, Teen Titans went through a major change that altered the flavor of the series completely.

The Art of WALLY WOOD


THE DAUGHTER OF A FARMER, JOAN WAS BORN IN THE VILLAGE OF DOMREMY IN JANUARY, 1412. SHE HAD NO FORMAL EDUCATION, AND ROAMED THE FORESTS AND FIELDS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE. SHE BECAME AWARE OF THE DEVASTATION THE INVADING ENGLISH WERE CAUSING, AND, GUIDED BY HER VISIONS, SHE WENT TO THE AID OF HER COUNTRY AND DAUPHIN. AFTER A LONG STRUGGLE SHE FINALLY GOT AN AUDIENCE. IMPRESSED, THE DAUPHIN BADE HER LEAD HIS TROOPS...
WOOD

Few individuals, regardless of profession, can boast of a career that is as successful and varied as Wally Wood's. Within his chosen field, Wood was an accomplished master. His art was as eagerly sought by fans as it was by publishers, and with good reason.

His widespread professional acceptance existed in large part because Wood had the ability to place himself within the story he was illustrating. He carefully envisioned not only the narrative itself, but also the milieu which necessarily exists about the periphery of any good tale. It was this ability to envision



(RIGHT) An example of Wood's early work for FOX, before his style fully developed. Within a few years, his work at EC (above) would become some of the best comic art ever published.

the reality of his characters that enabled Wood to construct a compelling graphic statement. In an era of slipshod craftsmanship, Wood maintained a guildsmanlike attitude towards his work, carefully composing his panels and filling them with the type of carefully-wrought detail that made his worlds come to life.

In times that saw most major publishers issuing page after page of backgroundless fight scenes, Wood turned to self-publishing, and composed woodland scenes which evoked a world as rich in interlace as Tolkein's Middle Earth, and as sumptuous in detail as is the pipe-organ of Disney's dwarves in *SNOW WHITE*. If Wood drew a spaceship, he filled the interior with as much hardware as the average Tru-Value store contains. If he drew a wizard's cottage, he gave it an organic completeness that realizes, in graphic terms, the goals of medieval alchemy.

Wood was clearly an artist who relished a challenging task. When assigned one, he immersed himself within the writer's framework and the characters' lives, gradually emerging from the writer's suggestions to produce, full-blown, a world that was complete unto itself.

Of course, Wood's artistic capabilities did not debut within the printed page in such an Athena-like fashion. Rather, his art followed a more normal progression as the man's experience and capabilities increased.

Wood's early work, as typified by the stories he drew for the somewhat risque Fox romance comics which date from the Summer of 1949 and following, appears to be the work of an artist looking for a style. Although it is true that the work he did for Magazine Village's notorious *TRUE CRIME COMICS* (volume 2 #1, dated August-September 1949 and signed "Woody") was fairly developed, his collaborative efforts in that comic were unlike the Fox stories attributed to him.

His Fox efforts apparently constituted Wood's first major relationship with a publisher, and Wood had about a dozen stories published in Fox romance comics before his first EC work appeared. In these early stories, most of what Wood drew is not recognizably his, although an occasional well-drafted face leaves little doubt that we are indeed looking at the early work of Wallace Wood.

MY LOVE MEMOIRS #9 (formerly *WOMEN OUTLAWS*) is dated November, 1949, and features a typical example of the type of work that Wood was doing for Fox before his relationship with EC began (in the January-February 1950 issue of *SADDLE ROMANCES, #10*). Although signed–more or less—by Wood (see the lower right corner of the splash page to *"My Secret Husband"*) few panels exhibit any characteristics whatsoever that are typical of Wood's work. Being a romance story which concerns a rather prudish woman, *"My Secret Husband"* allows Wood little opportunity to delineate the scenes for which he was to become familiar. The story's lack of physical action does not allow Wood the opportunity to present a physical motion scene, and the inhibited nature of the story's heroine prevents her from adopting the type of seductive posture that Wood's ladies typically employ. In fact, were it not for the older

woman's classic facial attributes in the splash panel, and for the husband's rendering in the story's third to last panel, it would be difficult to believe that this story is truly by Wood. Further, the man's face on page 6 panel 6 looks more like the work of Jack Kirby rather than that of Wood, while panel 8 on page 6 shows the man in a style that looks more like Kubert's than Wood's. This same man—the husband in the secret marriage—looks like Ogden Whitney drew him on page 10 panel 4!

Clearly, Wood's initial work was published before his style was fully developed.

What was the work like, then? To be blunt, it looked like typical low-grade shop work. The characters rarely had the same facial characteristics from scene to scene. The panels exhibited little sense of artistic composition (i.e., the arrangement of the pictorial elements in such a way as to lead the eye in a certain manner, thereby producing some type of visual/emotional impact). The various characters were seldom drawn in any type of reality-based perspective, and some (such as the lady on page 10 panel 1, or the man on page 10 panel 5) look downright bizarre.

On the other hand, touches of Wood's marvelous humor were in evidence. Wood worked his name onto the splash page by signing the back of a typewriter "under-wood." On page 2, Wood again works his name into the story by placing it in a sign that is hung on a building in an upside-down fashion. On page 3 the name "Harrison" is inked onto a bus bumper backwards (Harry Harrison may have collaborated on this story with Wood). On page 4 panel 4 the prudish heroine is seated at a table which has an open copy of the *NECRONOMICON* by "Abdul Al-Harazed" placed by a lamp which has a base shaped like a cat, which is itself signed "BOK." On page 5 panel 3 there is a traditional-type heart with an arrow through it, but in this case the arrow is tipped with a deadly hunting point. A specific wall is shown three times on page 9, in panels 1, 2, and 4, as the heroine's mother has an apparent heart attack in front of it. Even though only about 90 seconds elapse in story time as the story progresses from panel 1 to 4, three different paintings are shown hanging on that wall (the first is a fawn -or satyr, also signed by BOK). Finally, on page 10, the scene in the painting which hangs over the mother's bed changes from a Madonna-like mother and child to an "End of the Trail" Indian on horseback.

Wood's style may not have been developed when the composition of this story occurred, but he (and Harrison?) nonetheless infused it with a caring craftsman's personality.

Within seven months, however, Wood's style had gained great momentum. He was clearly a rising young professional within his field and made a graceful debut in the first issue of *WEIRD SCIENCE* (numbered "12" on the front cover and inside indicia).

This story, entitled *"Dream of Doom,"* and dated May-June, 1950, is fairly well-drafted. Wood's style at this point was still highly experimental, however, and there are few panels that actually look like they were drawn by Wood. Panels 3 and 4 of page 3 actually look more like the work of Steve Ditko than of Wood. The large face on page 4 panel 7 looks more like it was inked by Lou Fine (or even Will Eisner) than by Wood. The face on page 5 panel 4 shows a distinct Toth influence. In general, Wood's style at this point (perhaps once more due to Harrison's assistance) has yet to be developed.

The composition in this story, as well as certain other isolated features, is beginning to look more like the Wood style that people have associated with him, however. Mr. Bristol, as he is delineated on panel 3 of page 1, shows traces of Wood, particularly in the head that is, curiously, too tiny for the body is rests upon. Bristol's wife, as portrayed in panel 5 of page 2, shows hints of the classic female posturing which wood (and countless other artists since the days of classical Greece, about 400 BC) utilized to magnificent effect. The regal lady who is the focal point of the cover

of *WEIRD SCIENCE #14* for example clearly owes an acknowledgement to Mrs. Bristol.

Wood's style surfaces in other panels, too. The composition of panel 8 on page 3 (basically an arrangement of heads) is one that Wood would utilize frequently in the future. The farmer's face on page 6 panel 7 looks a great deal like Wood's typical mustachioed male face (and much like Black Jack Tarr of Marvel's *MASTER OF KUNG FU* series). Then, too, this story contains a fair amount of action which, although it does not appear to be typically Wood, nonetheless shows an experimental attitude towards rendering which will eventually lead to Wood's perfected style.

Wood's experimental phase, which can be traced with great clarity from his EC science fiction work, and which began to crystalize about issue #9 of *WEIRD SCIENCE* (september-October, 1951) had a heyday during 1950. Aside from his EC work, which was considerable, Wood also had work published by Kirby Publ. Co., Youthful, Avon, Fox, Fawcett and Trojan. This work appeared in quite a number of different comics. In fact, it seems that Wood had work appearing in more titles in 1950 than during any other year in his career. And that was before his style fully matured!

The titles that Wood's work was appearing in during 1950 apparently included the following: *BOLD STORIES, CANDID TALES, CAPT. SCIENCE, CAPTAIN STEVE SAVAGE, DOROTHY LAMOUR, JUNGLE PRINCESS, A FEATURE PRESENTATION*, the classic *FLYING SAUCERS, FRANK BUCK, HOOT GIBSON WESTERN, INSIDE CRIME, JUDY CANOVA, JUNGLE JO, LOVE STORIES, MARCH OF CRIME, MARTIN KANE, MY LOVE STORY, MY PAST, MY SECRET ROMANCE, MY STORY, PEDRO, SABU, THE ELEPHANT BOY, A STAR PRESENTATION MAGAZINE, TRUE SWEETHEART SECRETS*, and *WESTERN CRIMEBUSTERS*. The quality of this work ranged from very mediocre (and barely discernible as being from Wood's hand) to very good. Many collectors feel that *FLYING SAUCERS* was his best non-EC work of the year.

By the end of 1951, Wood had either sold, or was about to sell, stories to a number of aditional publishers. They included Standard, Ziff-Davis, Harwell, Magazine Enterprises, Master Publications, and the American Comics Group. Since Wood also kept selling to a number of publishers he had picked up the previous year, he was in fact churning out a tremendous number of pages of artwork. EC continued to hold his basic allegiance, but Wood did turn out two unqualified classics for Avon during this period as well. They were the science-fiction opus *AN EARTHMAN ON VENUS* and the magnificent *MASK OF DR. FU MANCHU*.

Given the quantity of work that was flowing from Wood's pen, it is hardly surprising that his style was making great strides. Undoubtedly due in part to the prodding of William Gaines (Wood's publisher at EC), Wood was, by the end of 1951, turning out excellent quality material.

In fact, by the time *WEIRD SCIENCE #10* appeared (November-December, 1951), Wood had developed most of the basic stylizations that have become the basis for his career.

One glance at *"The Maidens Cried,"* the lead story in *WS #10*, will reward the beholder with a feast of classic Wood elements. The lush flora and fauna which grace the splash panel are pure Wood, with plants that look like brains, and flowers that have eyes. Tiny alien creatures pose about the humanoid character's feet. The spaceship is gracefully Wood's, and the absorbing native female holds the spaceman's, as well as the reader's, gaze with a developed intensity (even though the inking on her dress might easily as well be attributed as Kubert as to Wood).

The interior of the spaceship (as shown in the second panel) is also classically Wood. There is hardware everywhere!

Perhaps more importantly, however, Wood has by this time almost fully developed his composition. The human characters which he puts into this story no longer appear to be tossed into the panel to satisfy the writer's requirements. Rather, the characters are carefully composed with an artful awareness of each other and of their surroundings. If Wood's artistic capabilities had never progressed beyond the stage of this story, he would still be fondly remem-

IN THE ATMOSPHERE PLANT THE EVIL SCIENTISTS PUZZLE OVER THE STRANGE APPARATUS AS CAPTAIN SCIENCE TAUNTS THEM.
SO THESE ARE THE GREAT SCIENTISTS OF MARS. YOU WILL NEVER LEARN WHAT THAT MACHINE IS, AND I WILL NEVER TELL YOU!
NO? BUT YOU WILL, EARTHLING... BRING THE ELECTRIC WHIP!
PUT TO TORTURE, CAPTAIN SCIENCE FINALLY SURRENDERS THE INFORMATION THE TREACHEROUS MARTIANS DEMAND...
HOW DO YOU LIKE OUR PERSUADER, EARTHLING? HAVE YOU HAD ENOUGH?

- It seems that Wood had work appearing in more titles in 1950 than during any other year in his career.

bered in the annals of comics artists.

Luckily for all concerned, however, Wood was to continue to strive to improve his style. As good as his work for EC was in late 1951, it still left a few aspects to be improved upon. For instance, Wally was still not able to delineate faces, particularly in close-up shots, with the type of grandeur that he was to attain a few years later. His handling of the finished inking of the cheekbones, in particular, was lacking a bit in precision. Overall, however, his style had nearly matured, and was starkly recognizable as the work of Wallace Wood.

By 1952, Wood was being published almost exclusively by EC. Although it is true that Avon/realistic continued to publish some of his work, and that two new publishers were added to his roster (Will Eisner and L. B. Cole's Star Publications), EC was clearly the publisher that Wood wished to work for.

This attitude of Wood's was fully explained in his experimental story-entitled *"My World."* Appearing in the final issue of *WEIRD SCIENCE* (#22, November-December, 1953), this autobiographical narrative is a first-person account of the longing's which filled Woody's soul. Clearly intended to be a swan song to a dying era (the death occurred in late 1954 when the Comics Code Authority prevented EC from issuing the type of science fiction story that it had issued previously), *"My World"* concludes with Wood seated at his drawing table, working on his final page of art for *WEIRD SCIENCE*. With eyes drawn so as to pierce the reader's soul, Wood proclaims "For my world is the world of science fiction... conceived in my mind and placed upon paper with pencil and ink and brush and sweat and a great deal of love for my world. For I am a science-fiction artist. My name is WOOD"

Considering the unprecedented nature of Wood's declaration, which he must have felt with a great deal of intensity, we empathize with Wood's situation. After all, his favorite publisher had been under attack from the late Dr. Wertham and crew, and now his two favorite titles, *WEIRD SCIENCE* and *WEIRD FANTASY*, were being cancelled. A lack of sales had forced this drastic action on the part of Gaines, who eventually had to acknowledge the whims of the marketplace and to cease the publication of these two comics.

So what were Gaines and Wood to do? For his part, Gaines had determined to fight for his science-fiction title(s), and he decided that, just possibly, one quarterly title (which he would call *WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY*) which was issued at a cover price of 15¢ might be successful where his two bi-monthly 10cers had failed. Wood, obviously a scrapper, was apparently determined to produce the best work of his career, undoubtedly hoping that his Herculean effort might somehow manage to save the title.

WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY certainly became one of the greatest comics series ever published. In the author's opinion, the only science fiction comic ever to rival this series was Fiction House's *PLANET COMICS*, and then only the issues between #30 and 55. Filled with Williamson, Orlando, Krigstein and Frazetta as well as Wood, *WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY* shines as a jewel in any comics collection.

Wood was given the lead story in the first issue of *WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY* (#23, dated March, 1954). He produced a magnificent tale of genetic mutation on a remote Earth colony entitled *"The Children."* Wood's artistic capabilities were clearly at an all-time high, as he and the other artists produced magnificent work. Even the rendering of faces was mastered by Wood by the time he produced his work for *WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY #24* (see page 8 panel 5 for an example), perhaps in response to being exposed to the work of Al Williamson. Wood was now feathering cheekbones in a classic manner, which meant that his somewhat irregular lines were drawn more uniformly, and in a nearly parallel fashion.

Although Wally unequivocally considered himself to be a science fiction artist, he also clearly relished the type of parody work that he was doing in *PANIC* and *MAD*. As mentioned earlier, it is Wood's willingness to completely fill his panels with the reality of the story that truly made him great. Many artists, after all, achieve a technical mastery of their medium and yet fall short of being "great." Wood always seemed willing to go to any lengths to create a perfect panel, however (given a decent script), and it is this attitude that makes his

LOOK! THE FLURGLE GANG IS MADE UP OF WOMEN!... QUICK LEMME AT MY GAS VIALS!
GAS VIALS! YOU WOULDN'T USE GAS VIALS ON WOMEN WOULD YOU, BAT BOY?
HANDS OFF, YOU DUMKOPF... I'M LOOKING FOR MY SECRET VIAL OF ARRID SPRAY DEODORANT!
PUT AWAY YOUR VIALS, YOUR WEAPONS, YOUR MECHANICAL DEVICES! THIS SITUATION CALLS FOR HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT!... MAINLY WRASSLING!
RIGHT!

career stand out beyond most others.

Because of this orientation, Wood's humor work was almost as noteworthy as his science fiction, and his fans usually treasure Wood's satires for their seemingly endless parade of nuances and side references. His awesomely detailed panels serve to satiate even the most gluttonous appetites, with their masterful presentation of stories within panels within stories.

It was lucky for Wood that this was so for, in 1955, the dreaded Comics Code Authority virtually halted his career in much the same way that the draft boards halted Muhammed Ali's in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Wood, of course, continued to do some work in the field after the CCA was put into effect, but it was minimal in comparison with what he had done before.

During 1955-1959, in fact, Wood finished up his relationship to the four-color EC line, doing a few stories each for *MAD*, *PANIC*, *INCREDIBLE SCIENCE-FICTION*, and *VALOR*. He tried to do a few things with Harvey Kurtzman, including *HUMBUG* and *TRUMP*, but Wood was apparently no happier with these than he was with the few things he was doing for DC and Marvel (including stories in *ALL-AMERICAN MEN O' WAR*, *JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY*, *JOURNEY INTO UNKNOWN WORLDS*, *MARVEL TALES*, *MYSTIC*, *OUR FIGHTING FORCES*, and *WESTERN GUNFIGHTERS*).

Perhaps Wally's most interesting color work during this period was done in collaboration with Jack Kirby, however, on the *CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN* comic book. Although Wood basically followed the pencil work done by Kirby (the composition is clearly almost all by Kirby), some traces of Wood's unique style do appear, such as in panel 2 of page 2 of issue #6. In that panel Wood renders "Ace Morgan—crack jet pilot" in a cockpit that looks remarkably like an EC spaceship. Further, the delineation of Ace's face, when considered within the over all composition of the entire panel, is superb, and even seems to touch upon three dimensionality. Basically, however, one could tell that the driving spirit which had motivated Wood to become a master in his field was dissipating.

Although unfortunate, this attitude was certainly understandable. During one year in the early 1950s the number of television sets in this country increased from 1,500,000 to more than 15,000,000, and various top comics professionals have related to the author that most publishers noted a concommitant drop in comic book circulations—a drop from which the industry has yet to recover. Wood had struggled through one of the most tumultuous periods in comic book publishing to enter and master his chosen field—only to have it crash about him, assaulted by joint barrage from television and Dr. Wertham. If Wood no longer felt the inspiration necessary to consistently produce masterpieces, we can certainly understand why.

In fact, it seems like the only work that Wood was consistently producing was for *MAD* magazine. For the only comics periodical still controlled by Gaines, Wood was a prolific and gifted contributor, although his contributions were now more likely to be a page or two at a time rather than a complete story.

This exigency had the effect of making Wally into more of a magazine illustrator than a comic book story-teller, and a close inspection of his finely-done work for *MAD* magazine indicates that Wood preferred being a story-teller.

Wood's comic book work career more or less faded out about 1964, at which time he set out to build another career. There were, however, considerably fewer comic book publishers in existence by then, and Wood contented himself with minor work for Dell/Gold Key and Charlton, as well as for Warren and Marvel. The work he did for Marvel at this time (primarily on *DAREDEVIL*) was probably the best of the lot, and he certainly did at least an adequate job of telling the story. Further, he was a welcome addition to Marvel's then-current stable of artists, and some degree of care was evident in his Marvel work.

Wood's best color work of the 1960s was to be reserved for a new comics publisher, however, named Tower Comics. Although they had previously published non-comics material previously, Tower debuted in the comics field with *THUNDER AGENTS #1* in 1965. Wood was to quickly adopt the character Dynamo as his own.

Although Wood would not draw for Tower with the intensity that he had exhibited at EC, he nonetheless utilized a very accessible, clean style that emphasized heroic men (with science-fictional

THEN BRING HER BACK WITH YOU! DON'T STAY HERE, SIR!
I'M TIRED, ELLIS! BEEN HOPPING ARO THE GALAXY FOR YEARS NOW! I WA SETTLE DOWN! TH PLACE LOOKS GOO ME!
ROCKY DAVIS—CHAMPION WRESTLER
SOS--YOUR ASSISTANCE IS NEEDED. SOS--COME AT ONCE-
RED RYAN—DAREDEVIL ACROBAT
PROF HALEY—EXPERT SKINDIVER

hardware) who became involved with beautiful women. Wood doubtless felt that Tower Comics had a great deal of potential (the Marvel juggernaut was at this time steadily gaining momentum, and super-heroes were more popular than they had been at any time since the close of World War II), and a certain exuberance—probably generated in part by being in on the "ground floor" of a promising new enterprise—was apparent in Wood's work.

Dynamo was clearly Wood's favorite Tower character, and even though a certain number of Dynamo pages were merely backgroundless fight scenes, many others were quite detailed and filled with a variety of Wood's favorite story elements. A recurring villainess that Dynamo encountered was named The Iron Maiden, and she saved Dynamo's life on more than one occasion. A stunning *femme fatale* whose metal costume hardly concealed her luscious body, the Iron Maiden was the type of romantic rogue that Caniff had popularized in the 1930s, with a costume.

On other occasions Dynamo battled with a savage Tyrannosaurus Rex, rocketed to the Moon, and encountered alien civilizations. In fact, a good argument could be made for stating that the lead story of *DYNAMO #4* (June, 1967) was Wood's farewell to Tower, and was constructed as a memorial to his EC work. The quality of the work in this story is superb—no lack of backgrounds here—and Wood managed to fill the detailed pages with so many of the elements that he portrayed so fondly in *"My World."* The story involves a group of large-headed aliens from the star system of Alpha Centauri (called the Immi), who apparently harbor hostile intentions toward the Earth. Wood fills the story with action scenes, including quite a number of violent robots who seek to harm Dynamo, as well as strange ray guns, space suits, and one nicely-done alien city. Naturally, the quality of his work is somewhat below the lovingly-crafted stories that he did for EC, but the story is nonetheless an excellent one.

Wood's career took an exciting new turn in 1967, one that was to reach beyond the work that he had previously done. It was during the first half of this year that Wood, encouraged by the continuing growth of comics fandom, decided to become a comic book publisher himself.

Wood seemed to have no intention of publishing mainstream comics, though, and rather decided to issue a publication that was meant for the involved comic book fan. Although such a publication would not have been commercially viable just a few years earlier, Wood's timing was good, and, following a judicious fandom-oriented advertising campaign that lasted for several months, Wood released the first issue of his now-classic *WITZEND*. Originally promoted as *ET CETERA*, this new publication had a press run of about 5000 copies, and it was aimed at an adult audience. It featured not only "adult" story-lines, but elements like bare female breasts which, although commonplace today, were nonetheless considered to be a bit controversial in 1967 (*PLAYBOY* itself did not dare to show any more of the female anatomy than that for four more years).

WITZEND featured the work of a number of artists (unlike the publications that Wood self-produced later). The project (particularly the early issues) was inspired by Wood, however, and—not surprisingly—his strips were about the best in the publication.

His art style was tightened up somewhat from his Tower work, and looked quite finished. What made the work outstanding, however, was that Wood managed to combine his favorite fantasy elements (such as alien creatures and exotic flora, utilizing yet-to-be-invented machinery like automatons) with the heavily detailed, humorously constructed panels that he did for *MAD* and *PANIC*. The result was pure Wood, and gloriously so. The visuals were as entertaining as the work he had done for EC, but the lack of machinery, and corresponding emphasis on nature and nudity, was refreshing in its newness. Of equal importance was the quality of the writing, which tended to emphasize the characters as ordinary, somewhat humorous people in extraordinary circumstances.

Although Wood's *WITZEND* was to continue for several years, Wood seemed to lose some of his interest in the project around issue #5, and after a while *WITZEND* seemed to simply fade away.

Meanwhile, Wood continued to do a minimal amount of work for the mainstream publishers. During the last twelve years, Wally worked on horror books including: *HOUSE OF MYSTERY, HOUSE OF SECRETS, THE UNEXPECTED, THE WITCHING HOUR,*

WHERE AM I?
WHAT IS THIS PLACE? ...HOW DID I GET HERE?
I...I... WHO AM I?
WAIT!
I'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE! THIS ISN'T REAL... IT'S JUST IN MY MIND...
AND THIS IS THE ALIENS' PLANET!

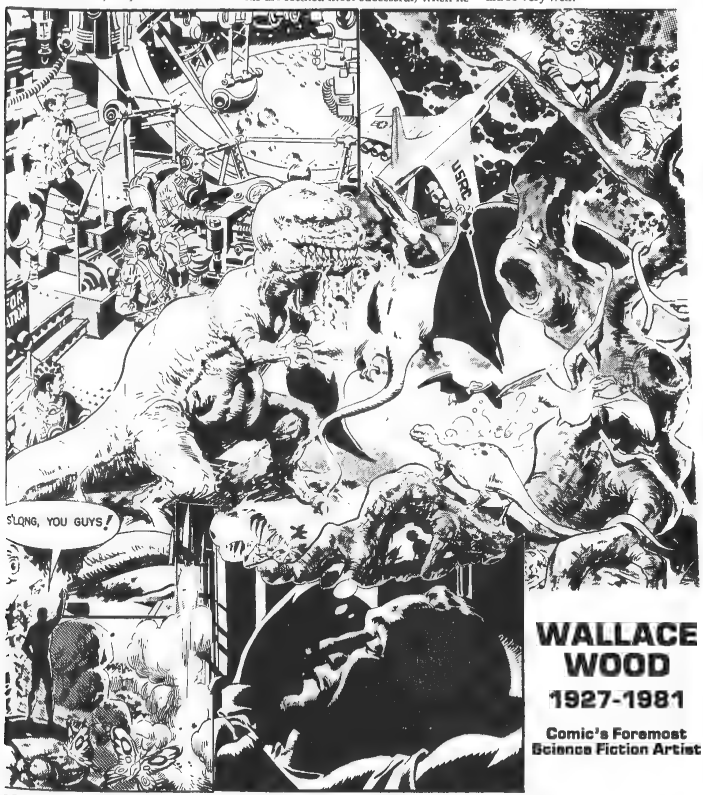
WEIRD MYSTERY TALES, *FROM BEYOND THE UNKNOWN*, *GHOSTS*, *TOWER OF SHADOWS*, *GHOST MANOR*, and *RED CIRCLE SORCERY*. His Super-hero-type work included *CAPTAIN ACTION*, *ANGEL AND THE APE*, *ANTHRO*, *JUNGLE JIM*, *ASTONISHING TALES*, *VAMPIRELLA*, *WONDER WOMAN*, *CAPTAIN AMERICA*, *KULL THE CONQUERER*, *THE CAT*, *THE DESTRUCTOR*, *HERCULES UNBOUND*, *RICHARD DRAGON*, *KUNG FU FIGHTER*, *STALKER*, *SUPER-TEA*, *FAMILY*, *WULF THE BARBARIAN*, *ISIS*, and *ALL-STAR*. In addition to this, he did work for *OUR ARMY AT WAR*, *UNKNOWN WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION*, *COMIX INTERNATIONAL*, and *PLOP*. Although the above appear to be quite a number of titles, they really do not comprise an overwhelming number of actual Wood *pages*, given the span of time over which they occur. After all, Wally had work published in about as many titles during the year of 1950 alone!

The 1970s did produce some interesting artistic pairings, including Wood and Walt Simonson on *HERCULES UNBOUND #7*, and Wood and Jack Kirby in *THE SANDMAN #6*. For the most part, however, Wood's work for the mainstream companies during the 1970s was somewhat subdued. He did not seem interested enough in any other publisher's titles to do stunning work. The pay would be the same whether the job was truly incredible or simply adequate, and Wood had already proven his artistic quality two decades earlier.

It seems that the only work Wood felt was worth a great deal of extra effort was work that he was going to publish himself. Several years ago he was primarily concerned with *CANNON*, an extremely hard-boiled private eye type, *SALLY FORTH* a semi-pornographic humor strip, and then with *THE KING OF THE WORLD* (an excellent color edition of which was published by Sea Gate Distributors, Inc.*), and most recently with *GANG BANG*, a sex-oriented comics publication. Of these, Wood was at his best in *THE KING OF THE WORLD*, and most particularly with the fantasy elements therein. Although he now seems to disdain a fine line, preferring fewer and broader strokes, his visualization of fantasy elements remains superb. For example, pages 6 and 7 from *THE KING OF THE WORLD* feature giant stone heads, a hut built of skeletons, a were-man who has his head severed, a wizard's cottage built under the roots of a massive tree, complete with an

eyeball instead of a doorknocker, furniture that walks and talks, and self-serving tableware with feet, as well as the wizard and the hero... all in just two pages!

In sum, then, Wally Wood's career was a long, varied, and successful one. In five short but eventful years, Wood mastered his craft, only to fall victim to the uncaring social forces which devastated his career and his industry generally. He reached his artistic peak while young in life, much like Picasso, but still turned out an excellent tale when he was motivated to do so. His style underwent a number of evolutionary steps over the years, but he seemed most content (and his art seemed most successful) when he was motivated to create a fantasy world of endless marvelous detail. At such times his humor was delightful, his art absorbing, and his prose properly functional. Few artists could produce entertaining work in each of five different decades; Wood did so, and as his numerous stylistic imitators prove, he did so very well.



WALLACE WOOD

1927-1981

Comic's Foremost Science Fiction Artist

Do not attempt to adjust this page. We control it. We can do anything we want with this page. Because it goes from the inner sections of the magazine.....

.....to the outer reaches of the -

FANDOMZONE

Characters © 1982 Marvel Comics Group

[Until coverage of this year — 1969 — our history of comics fandom has tended toward a stodgy outline of facts and figures of fandom. We've told you about annual comics awards, hoping that you'll gather from them something of the concerns and tastes of the ancient world of comics fandom. As we approach medieval comics fandom, though, we adopt a more informal, anecdotal view of the microcosm. This may mean that we'll take more than one installment to cover a year. It may mean that we'll ramble further afield in the byways of digression. Put on your mental hiking shoes. If you have any memories of your own to contribute, you can send them directly to us: Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060 — or to the letter column of **Comics Feature.**]

The year that men first walked on the surface of the moon was not one of similarly memorable milestones in our four-colored world. But face it; nothing like the moonwalk had happened since history began. The fact

that fandom's little news notes seem a bit trivial these days is hardly a surprise. Trivia is still fun to explore.

Do you, for example, remember a DC comic book called **The Secret Six**? It had begun the previous year, folded in 1969 with its seventh issue, and became such a hot collector's item that a complete file in mint condition will cost you $7.50 by 1981 **Price Guide** prices. The comic book was a lot of fun, involving a premise that was a mystery. We don't mean that it was what is now called a "mystery" comic — a euphemistic description of a comic with stories about ghosts and werewolves and what used to be called "horror."

The mystery involved a group put together by a character known only by the code name "Mockingbird" — who blackmailed its members into belonging. (**He had, infact, poisoned the members and kept them alive with short-term antidote pills**.) In the course of the comic's existence, readers were supposed to look for clues to "Mockingbirds 's identity. The stories were briskly told, the clues were tantalizing, and fans had a lot of fun with it. But its seventh issue was its last — and the seventh issue did not resolve the question of which character was "Mockingbird."

Fans collecting the title at this late date must wonder what was going on; fans at that time wondered the same thing. If you want to play the game, you might take into account our suggestions: that Carlo (in #2) and King (in #3) eliminated themselves by their thoughts and, moreover, that Lili wondered about something in #5, when Mockingbird had the information. Our nominee for Mockingbird was the character Doc (a chemist who could have analyzed and duplicated the pills but didn't, who had a bottle full of them when he was supposed to have only one at a time, and who suggested in the first place that Mockingbird must be a member of the group).

Have we made you curious enough to try to solve the mystery for yourself? Then we should probably mention that editor Dick Giordano said that he didn't know who the leader was, either. We reported in our newsletter **Newfangles**, "Seems the idea was to keep people guessing as long as possible and then unveil him/her. Meanwhile, no decision was made on who it would be — so no inadvertent clues would be given." Giordano said he leaned toward the character Crimson Dawn, because she was so unlikely. What do you think? Should DC reissue the series?

It seems to us that a serious, limited **mystery** series just might fascinate a readership more largely composed of fans than was the readership of more than a decade ago. Giordano works for DC to this day. Wouldn't it make sense to produce a limited-run series of, say, ten issues which would do the story **complete** — at a cost to the company of a small reprint fee and original work for three new issues?

While fictional crimes occupied the minds of fans, truly fannish crimes began. Until then, comics fans had been mostly a mutually trusting bunch. But 1969 brought the continuation of an unfortunately continuing trend. Australian fan John Ryan had a portion of his collection stolen; luckily, he knew who had done it (a fan who "dropped by" while John was out and remained in his collection room for a time) and settled matters. Things were not as satisfactory in Toronto, where "Captain George" Henderson wrote us that two major thefts of collections occurred — perpetrated by a thief who convinced fans he was a fellow collector and learned where collections were kept and how to get at them. (George had been a victim of theft the previous year, when someone threw a brick through his store's plate glass window to steal a copy of **Batman** #1.)

Alarming in a different way was the sad plight of comics/pulp collector Rob Gluckson, whose doctor told him in 1969 to get rid of his comics/SF magazine collection, because Rob had developed an allergy to pulp paper. Think about it. Rick Durell wrote, "I think I can tell you for sure that Rob has taken his doctor's advice (or is giving it a go). He told me of a big LA comic club meet and that he had gotten the meet together in order to sell out his comics, etc. I wonder how long he will be able to stay away from collecting (if he **really** makes the start, that is). Once it's in a person's blood, it's a hard thing to break away from."

To return to the discussion of True Crime in Comics, we should mention an episode of **Dragnet** (on NBC on Thursday nights in 1969) in which a kid stole valuable old comics and costumed-hero movie items. At one point, the kid explained to the cops that he was the Crimson Crusader and couldn't tell them his real name, since no one should know the real name of a hero, gangsters would give a fortune to learn it, and so on. What bothered us was that the **Dragnet** shows were supposedly true stories. (Remember the line about only the names being changed to protect the innocent?) Well, after all those years, we are **still** unable to locate any evidence that such a crime/criminal ever existed. Sigh . . . If you can't trust Joe Friday, whom can you trust?

Speaking of television, **Star Trek** fans who are also comics fans might like to take a look at "Spectre of the Gun" again. This episode (which first aired October 25, 1968) featured Sam Gilman as Doc Holliday (who loaned McCoy tranquilizing material). Only Jerry De Fuccio ever pointed out to us that Sam Gilman was the very same comic-book artist and writer who did such characters as Vapo-Man and Iron Skull for Centaur (1939-40). (Gilman had been in movies for years, though his only regular TV role was as Sam Grafton, the saloon keeper in **Shane** [September-December 1966].)

Comics fandom had an increasing number of small local clubs forming. For example, in Cleveland, Ohio, one was taking shape under the leadership of high-school student Tony Isabella — all its members agreeing that it should be called The Graphic Art Society of Cleveland. (Its acronym, GAS, was appropriate; the club met once a month so its members could do just that.)

However important local club meetings were to small fannish groups, comics conventions were becoming important to fandom as a whole. What had begun almost as an experiment the previous year was becoming locked into fannish tradition.

In 1968 Phil Seuling's New York City convention had beeen a major event. On the July 4th weekend, it had had a membership topping 700, and a number of pros in the field attended. Seuling and his committee decided to try to duplicate the event in 1969. Thanks to the sort of

foul-up that gives con chairmen ulcers, there was a loss of $140 on the luncheon; 140 people attended, and the tickets had been accidentally underpriced by $1 each. Despite that, the con turned a profit, and Phil even turned down offers from people who learned of the problem and offered to donate an extra dollar. (Until the books were finally settled, Phil was in personal hock for more than $3000. We know, $3000 today can get you a copy of **Walt Disney's Comics & Stories** #1. Today, $3000 may seem a bearable amount. But in them days, children, $3000 was a heck of an investment for someone to make on the hope that a bunch of fans would attend a con.)

Thanks to the success of Seuling's con that second year, a tradition of annual cons in New York City was established. Annually, fans and dealers get together on this weekend to devote themselves to fun, information, and haggling.

In our newsletter that year, we faced something that you'll find repeatedly today in magazines offering you news of upcoming comics. The problem was — and is — that if you want accurate information about what will surely happen, you'll have to wait for it to happen and find it reported as history. News announcements about upcoming events will always, inevitably, be in error part of the time. (We had more trouble than many fan reporters. We didn't live in New York City, though we had friends in the industry, and there was no official interest in supplying fans with news. The same companies which today hand out news to reporters and supply review copies of their output were uncooperative in 1969. When they weren't uncooperative, they at least did not volunteer information — and there were occasional attempts to find out who our "spies" were when we did find news items. Events could change radically within a week. For example, at the world SF con, Denny O'Neil told us that **Green Lantern** and **Justice League** were to be cancelled in the fall of 1969, barring a dramatic increase in sales. When the titles didn't fold, people who didn't understand the nature of changing decisions in comics accused us of making up the news.)

We did, though, give a Sign of Things to Come in **Newfangles** #38 (November 1969):

> "Dealers interested in contributing to a price guide on old comic books, contact Jerry Bails . . . . He confirms our published comment about comic prices hitting a peak earlier this year and feels the market is stable enough now to warrant a price guide."

We saw Jerry at a con, and he was carrying around a cumbersome list with notations on a vast number of comics issues and titles. It was obviously a long-term labor and one complex enough to drive a compiler batty, since many titles were of so little interest that it was hard to know what had been published, much less what dealers were charging for the items.

The first issue came out the next year, copyright 1970 by Robert M. Overstreet, the "publishing editor," with Jerry as "associate editor." Obviously, we were all correct that the market had at last stabilized. **Four-Color Comic** #9 ("Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold") was then listed at $40 ($60 in mint condition). Obviously, that stable price has changed little since then.

THEY APPEAR FRIENDLY, CAPTAIN. BUT THEY INSIST ON CALLING ME NAMOR! WHAT IS A NAMOR?
COMIC CON!
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE MMMS?
FOOM!

COMIC GOURMET

THE CURSED EARTH,
Part One

The chronicles of Judge Dredd. Volume Two by Pat Mills, Mike McMahon & Brian Bolland... **$7.95**

AMBASSADOR OF THE SHADOWS

Valerian, spatiotemporal agent. By J.C. Mezeres and P. Christian. Published by Darquad.
..... **$3.95**

THE FIRST KINGDOM,
Book Fifteen
By Jack Katz.... **$1.50**

Robert

If it is not a good comic, you will not find it in here.

Anderson

AMBASSADOR OF THE SHADOWS, VALERIAN spatiotemporal agent, by J.C. Mezeres and P. Christian, published by Darguad ($3.95-307 Benjamin-Hudon St. Laurent, Montreal)

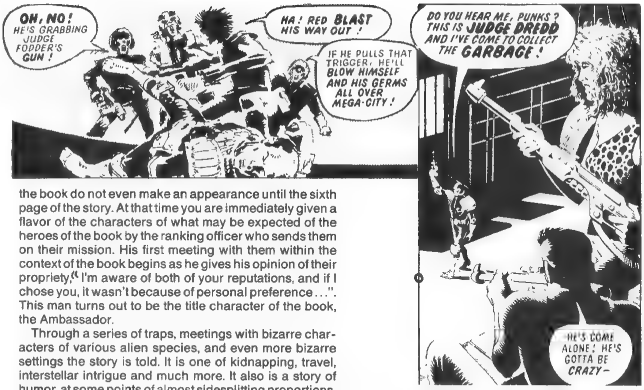
After the bombardment of humorous material from our Francon friends, humor of all types presented in album form — westerns, barbarians, and even little boys in semi-comical, semi-adventurous stories — a separate cascade of material has descended upon us inspired by the minions of Heavy Metal. Most of this material has been visually exciting but somewhat lacking in clear storytelling. For most comic fans it has been more attractive than the previous group of material largely because it does offer action-oriented stories to a group lusting after vicarious thrills and constant mayhem. The book we have here is virtually a hybrid of the two types of material. Like the best of the adventure strips, strange vistas, visually exciting panels, and constant action can be found throughout, and yet the story manages to present a clear, concise adventure of our time traveling spaceman and his friends.

This book is one of the first in a new series to be published by Darguad. The series will present English language versions of graphic albums previously published by their French mother company. The books will be in the graphic album format on good white paper, with cardboard covers and square binding. These books have already achieved a high rate of acceptance in Europe although they are untested in the North American market that these editions are designed for. The series is being published in lush full color which works to good advantage on the offset stock on which they are printed. Darguad was one of the first companies to popularize this format which in recent years had been adopted in the United States by such varied companies as Whitman, Eclipse, and Marvel Comics Graphic Album Series.

The high quality and carefully told presentation is largely due to Pierre Christian who besides being an experienced comic book writer also happens to hold a doctorate in Comparative Literature from the Sorbonne and is

Director of the Department of Journalism at Bordeaux University. This study of past works of literature is evident in the manner in which he developes the theme and plot within the book. He carefully sets the stage within which the action will take place and only then introduces the protagonists of the story. In fact, the main characters of

HOWE! THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF RACES ON CENTRAL POINT, AND MY JOB IS TO SEE TO THE RECEPTIONS! MY LONELY RECEPTION! EVERYTHING WAS READY FOR THE AMBASSADOR!
THE CENTERPIECES, THE CANAPÉS
WE MUST CONTACT THE EARTH! CALL OUT THE ARMY!!! BECAUSE CENTRAL POINT
WHAT ARE YOU GRUNCH GETTING AT?


OH, NO! HE'S GRABBING JUDGE FODDER'S GUN!
HA! RED BLAST HIS WAY OUT!
IF HE PULLS THAT TRIGGER, HE'LL BLOW HIMSELF AND HIS GERMS ALL OVER MEGA-CITY!
DO YOU HEAR ME, PUNKS? THIS IS JUDGE DREDD AND I'VE COME TO COLLECT THE GARBAGE!
HE'S COME ALONE! HE'S GOTTA BE CRAZY-

the book do not even make an appearance until the sixth page of the story. At that time you are immediately given a flavor of the characters of what may be expected of the heroes of the book by the ranking officer who sends them on their mission. His first meeting with them within the context of the book begins as he gives his opinion of their propriety."I'm aware of both of your reputations, and if I chose you, it wasn't because of personal preference...". This man turns out to be the title character of the book, the Ambassador.

Through a series of traps, meetings with bizarre characters of various alien species, and even more bizarre settings the story is told. It is one of kidnapping, travel, interstellar intrigue and much more. It also is a story of humor, at some points of almost sidesplitting proportions, especially during virtually any event containing one of the most unique aliens of all, the grumpy convertor from Bluxte. This tongue-in-cheek background feeling which is present throughout the strip is a constant reminder that the strip may have roots in the adventure genre but is also firmly planted with one foot in the camp that produced Asterix, Lucky Luke, and Iznogoud.

Jean-Claude Mezieres, the artist on the series, is a veteran of the pages of Pilote and one of the most accomplished masters of combining adventure with a semi-cartoony style that this reviewer has seen. The cover bears comments on the art by such masters in their own right as Russ Manning, Jim Steranko, Kelly Freas, William Rostler, and Harvey Kurtzman. The introduction is a rave by Will Eisner. Compliments from artists of this calibre are not easily earned and should help to indicate why the book is worth taking a look at from an artistic viewpoint. The feel of the art has just the right amount of cartoonish effect while retaining enough of a realistic styling to achieve the desired effect.

THE CURSED EARTH, PART ONE, the Chronicles of Judge Dredd Volume Two by Pat Mills, Mike McMahon and Brian Bolland ($7.95 - Titan Books, 58 St., Giles High St., London, England)

This one is an odd one. While it reads quite well and the art is very pleasant to look at somehow it leaves me with a disturbed feeling, not completely satisfied, as if something wasn't quite right. There is no question that Pat Mills, the author, is doing an excellent job of storytelling although with somewhat superficial characterization. The art is fine throughout and especially in those sections done by Brian Bolland who has become somewhat known to American audiences through his work for Green Lantern and through one chapter for the special Justice League #200. Here, where he feels quite at home with the characters, he does not disappoint.

The book is published by Titan Books a distributor of comics to British comic shops. Following in the footsteps of their compatriots in the States they have utilized their position in the market to bring to fruition projects near and dear their own hearts which are not being produced

HE'S DEAD! YOU JUST SAVED MEGA-CITY ONE, DREDD. NOW... WILL YOU SAVE MEGA-CITY TWO?
WHEN THOUSANDS COULD TURN INTO CRAZY MONSTERS LIKE RED...? THERE'S NO REFUSING!
I OWE HIM! ...SHOW ME MY WHEELS... I WANT TO GET MOVING... FAST!
SOMEHOW I'M GONNA MAKE IT — ACROSS THE CURSED EARTH!

by the publishers for whom they distribute. The book is packaged as an oversized softcover book more similar to what one would term a tradeback than to the traditional format of the graphic novel. In other words, the book has a hefty, very substancial feel to it with a very good grade of paper used throughout. Printed in Holland the clarity of reproduction is excellent and certainly far superior to the original vehicle in which these stories appeared, 2000 AD. 2000 AD is a weekly comic book in the British format and therefore on cheap paper and without a slick cover with interior stock substituting for the slick paper we have come to expect. However gathered in this series, with this being the second and third already scheduled for publication, the material is seen to its fullest quality. Not only does the art shine through with every detail showing but the story itself is much less choppy when read in this way. Hopefully many comic shops in the United States and Canada will pick up on the series of publications and the publisher will be encouraged to continue to make fine British comic book material available to those who have never had the opportunity to see it before. It is somewhat odd that Americans are more familiar with the material which originally saw print in French in Pilote and Metal Hurlant and such publications without being exposed to the material printed in England in our common language. Perhaps the old adage of us being one people divided by a common language holds true. If so it is unfortunate if it proves a barrier to enjoying such fine comic work as may be found here.

The thematic setting of the material is a future world where a few giant cities are the home of mankind and an elect core of Judges are empowered to enforce the law of the land. (More in depth information on the series can be found in an interview conducted with writer Pat Mills appearing in BEM and in an overview of the Judge Dredd character appearing in FANTASY EMPIRE #1.) This episode is concerned with an effort by Judge Dredd to deliver a vaccine to the plague-ridden victims of Mega City Two. To do so he must traverse the vast wasteland between the cities of New York and California and face the incredible perils such a journey involves in the desolate future America. He is assisted by such odd characters as Spikes Harvey Rotten, an anarchist who does not approve of the system of Judges, Tweak, a giant anteater, and three thow-away judges and wardroids. The story has some moments of compassion but is incredibly violent and almost bloodthirsty throughout standing as a stark contrast to the much tamer and more innocuous American fare. The tale will conclude in a second volume and the first volume leaves the protagonists in the midst of their trek.

This book is an example of one type of material produced in the British Isles and is perhaps the best introduction for an American reader first encountering the comic material of that nation. Other British comics offer a range of material including Victorian romances, sports stories, science fiction and many, many stories devoted to World War II. The material most likely to appeal to an audience in this country is to be found primarily in the Marvel publications and in such IPC magazines as 2000

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TUNNEL –
MEGA-CITY 1
NO ENTRY
AS PUNISHMENT FOR YOUR CRIMES I REMOVE YOUR CITIZENSHIP. YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO ENTER MEGA-CITY ONE FOR TEN YEARS!
Y-YOU CAN'T DO THIS! THIS PLACE IS A HELL ON EARTH!
GIVE ME TWENTY YEARS – THIRTY – ONLY PLEASE DON'T BANISH ME!
PLEASE! DON'T GO!
IN THE NAME OF MERCY, DON'T DO THIS TO US!
HARSH BUT NECESSARY LET THEM SERVE AS AN EXAMPLE. LET EVERY MAN KNOW THAT CITIZENSHIP IS A PRIVILEGE – NOT A RIGHT!
THE LAW MUST BE OBEYED. THE LAW WILL BE OBEYED!

AD, and Battle. Marvel primarily publishes reprints of our own familiar characters as well as some new superhero material and media adaptations such as Dr. Who, Blake's Seven and Worzel Gummidge. IPC, on the other hand, is much more truely a British comics company and their material is not familiar to an American audience. Of that material Judge Dredd is no doubt the most popular. Pat Mills, the writer of much of the Judge Dredd material and all of it in this volume, is also the author of such popular series as Nemesis, Slaine, and Charley's War. He is a persistent winner of the Eagle Awards which are the awards which British comic fans give to their idols. Mike McMahon has drawn the most Judge Dredd stories of any artist and is also the artist for Slaine. Brian Bolland, the one member of the creative staff who needs no introduction to the American comics reader, has had his comic book material published in such diverse countries as the United States, Nigeria and of course England. All in all the book makes quite a good read and is a look at a different way of doing comics.

THE FIRST KINGDOM, Book Fifteen ($1.50 - Bud Plant, Box 1886, Grass Valley, Ca.)

By now most readers are familiar with the saga which Jack Katz has been unfolding over the past fifteen issues of this book. The story of the rise of the First Kingdom is one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken and publisher Bud Plant must be commended for his courage

in supporting this publication. It should also be remembered that this is one of the first alternative market, direct-only projects ever. The introductions to these books have been written by a virtual who's who of the stellar names of comics art and virtually any comic reader will find that his

idol in the comics book world has complimented these books at one time or another. The packaging is that of a standard comic book although magazine size and on a slightly higher grade of newsprint. This is quite unfortunate as the fine details of many of the panels lose much of their crispness as a result of the paper quality. A marked difference can be seen in those issues of the series printed on white paper stock. Fortunately, this grade of newsprint is far whiter than the standard poorer grade used in most comic books.

The covers to this issue are two of the best in the series and the fine coloring work by John Pound lends a great deal to the appearance and impact to the artwork. Two much storyline has passed in the first fourteen issues to succintly sum up the course of the tale here although Bill Sherman does a yeoman's job in attempting just that task in six paragraphs on the inside front cover of the book itself. Anyone not familiar with the story so far will initially be confused but the story is interesting enough to be worth the effort and with the help of the introduction the reader will fairly quickly be able to comprehend the major currents of the material. Better yet the new reader could buy the previous fourteen issues of the book (which I believe are still in print) and enjoy the entire saga from the beginning. One odd point about the presentation of the book is the introduction on the inside front cover by the artist/writer Jack Katz in which he summarizes what the reader will read about within the issue. Why he feels it necessary to explain this is beyond me. As the introduction explains the book does indeed contain the following: Turdran discovers his identity, the ultimate confrontation in Helleas draws ever closer as Dranok presses Ogsoltoman into revealing the origins of the gods, and the nature of the First Kingdom is alluded to out of the memory of five-year-old Tarvu. Perhaps this is the creator's way of following the Truth in Labeling Act. It is somewhat puzzling. It does not draw away from the enjoyment of the book though. My only real objection to the contents of the book was that in a package of only thirty two pages it seems excessive to include seven full page panels since these both take away from the story and actually somewhat impede the overall flow. They are very nice panels but they are out of place. Overall I do feel that the book is a worthwhile effort and a part of one of the longest lasting epics to be attempted in graphic format. If the story is ever completed and then is gathered into one or two volumes, collectively it will comprise one of the most important works in the graphic medium.

by Margaret O'Connell

Kitty Pryde's Letters Home from Emma Frost's Academy,

or,

What If Sprite's Stay at Hellfire Prep Had Lasted More Than a Mere Five Hours?

The following letter was found on the desk in Kitty Pryde's room at her new prep school following her abrupt departure after being telepathically mugged by headmistress.

Emma Frost's Academy
for Nasty Little Girl Mutants
Arkham, Massachusetts

Dear Mom and Dad,

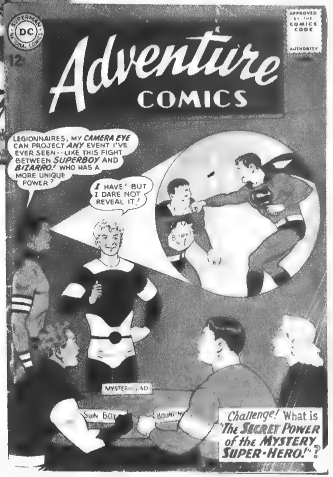
I know you took me out of Professor Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters because you wanted me to be in a more wholesome, normal environment, but I'm not sure this place is what you had in mind. Did you know that the headmistress is legally dead? (it happened in some kind of phoenix-shaped explosion and fire in the lab last year.) And that every Saturday night she gets dressed up in this weird eighteenth-century Playboy bunnyish leather bodice and holds orgies in the administration building with a bunch of decadent-looking rich guys from New York? Maybe that's why she has the grounds patrolled by all those guards in tight black leather jumpsuits and Iron Man Halloween masks (dyed preppy pink).

The rest of the faculty is kinda strange, too. When I broke the computer again last week the teacher got real mad and sent me to the Dean of Discipline, who has a signed photograph of some kind of orangutan on her desk and keeps all the lights turned off in her office, probably because she has jaundice or something and is scared that she'll lose her job if anyone notices that her skin is a sickly shade of yellow. Anyway, Dean Nekra told me to write "Hate makes me strong" one thousand times as punishment for damaging school property. Then she started muttering something that she said was the school cheer under her breath. Personally, I don't think I'd be very encouraged to hear the people in the standings chanting, "Hate, hate, hate, distaste, dyspepsia, intense dislike" if I were on the school basketball team, but I guess it's supposed to demoralize their opponents or something.

My classmates seem nice enough, though Theresa spends most of her time mailing cakes with files in them to her Uncle Tom in prison, and Illyana falls asleep whenever I start to tell a story and keeps turning into her tin-plated form whenever she gets homesick for her parents back on the collective farm in Russia. But if any of the current study body take after the alumnae who were here for the big reunion last weekend, there must be some pretty weird kids here somewhere. One of the old graduates who showed up was bright blue. At least, I think she was. She kept changing her face, body, and hairstyle so often that I'm not sure what she really looked like. That didn't bother me much at first, though I did think it was kinda funny that Ms. Frost forgot to mention someone as socially prominent as Janet Pym when she was bragging to you about all the famous alumnae this school has. But then I realized that I'd never heard of Janet Pym having a beloved friend named Irenee with gray hair and an oversized head who spells her name wrong (probably because she's blind). So I guess it wasn't her after all.

Uh-oh, I gotta go now. The headmistress just staggered into my room, and she's wearing nothing but a transparent nightgown . . .

20 Years Ago this Month


DC
Adventure
COMICS
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
LEGIONNAIRES, MY CAMERA EYE CAN PROJECT ANY EVENT I'VE EVER SEEN - LIKE THIS FIGHT BETWEEN SUPERBOY AND BIZARRO! WHO HAS A MORE UNIQUE POWER?
I HAVE! BUT I DARE NOT REVEAL IT!
Challenge! What is "The SECRET POWER of the MYSTERY SUPER-HERO!"?

3 VILLAINS VS. 14 HEROES...

THE GOOD GUYS HAVEN'T GOT A CHANCE!

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BY CHRIS CLAREMONT • WALT SIMONSON • TERRY AUSTIN

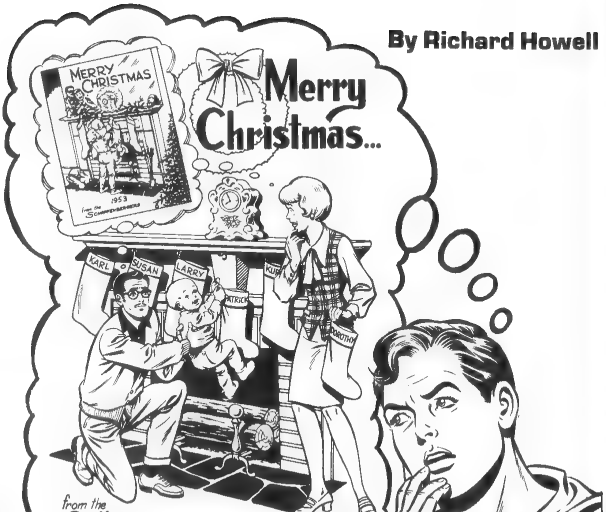
ON SALE AUGUST 8th!

INTERVIEW

A Talk With

Kurt Schaffenberger

By Richard Howell



HOWELL: Could you recount your early career, including whatever art training you had, for the benefit of those who are only familiar with your later work?

SCHAFFENBERGER: I was born in Germany, and when I was seven, my family came to this country. I was raised in West Hartford, Conn., and attended school there until high school. As a result of a scholarship that I won while in high school, I attended Pratt Institute and took their three-year course in illustration. I helped myself along during that time by working as an apprentice tool maker in a tool and die shop (the United Tool and Die Company of Hartford, Conn.).

HOWELL: I'm sure that some of our readers will be surprised to learn that you weren't associated with the *"Captain Marvel"* family of characters during their entire publication lifespan. Do you feel that there was still room for important contributions to be made in the *"Marvel Family"* look and story-telling style at the time you joined? Do you feel that you did contribute something to them? If so, what?

SCHAFFENBERGER: I am not sure which publication spans you're talking about, whether at Fawcett or at DC. At Fawcett I got in after the war. I first started on *"Ibis the Invincible"* and then they switched me to *"Captain Marvel, Junior,"* and I had been helping out Jack Binder on *"Mary Marvel,"* prior to that, and I had also done some *"Captain Marvel"* for *WHIZ COMICS.* And then they gave me *THE MARVEL FAMILY* to do every month there for a time—until it stopped publication. As far as DC is concerned, when they came to disagreement with C.C. Beck, they asked me to take over to make it look as much like the old stuff as possible—which I did—and then they were doing nothing for a while but re-runs, reprints of old stories and then they revived it, and I was doing it again for awhile.

WHEN LOIS INVESTIGATES...
WHAT'S THIS? A LETTER FROM SUPERMAN!
I'LL BET HE'S SORRY FOR WHAT HAPPENED... AND HE WANTS ME BACK IN METROPOLIS!
MAYBE HE'S EVEN READY TO PROPOSE!
BUT IN HER APARTMENT...
STILL DREAMING, EH, YOU LITTLE GAP? GET WITH IT, LOIS, BABY! YOU'LL NEVER MAKE IT AS MRS. SUPERMAN!
IF HE HASN'T PROPOSED YET, HE NEVER WILL!
TO LOIS .. FROM SUPERM

Then they switched the feature over to the Don Newton style, and they asked me to ink that for awhile, to pull it back closer to what it used to be. As far as my contribution, I think they originally wanted it to look as much like the old stuff as possible, and then when the new look came in, they didn't want it to be such a complete change from what it used to be, so they got me in again, and then finally took me off of it. I think Dave Hunt is doing the inking on it [*"Shazam!"*] now.

HOWELL: Were you under any editorial direction to make the characters look like C.C. Beck's versions, or Mac Raboy's? How would you compare your approaches to theirs?

SCHAFFENBERGER: Well, initially, we were instructed to emulate Beck's style (and Mac Raboy's for Junior) as closely as possible, but when you consider the *"Captain Marvel Junior"* feature, for instance. I was assigned to do those stories after Mac Raboy left, but Bud Thompson was also doing some, Joe Certa was doing it occasionally, and Charlie Tomsey was also doing some stories. We all tried to look as much like Raboy as possible, but how close we came varied with each individual artist.

HOWELL: Are there any other artists whose styles have had some influence on you—either in story-telling style or in actual drawing style?

SCHAFFENBERGER: When I first got into the comics field, there were three giants whom we all admired and not necessarily tried to copy, but whose styles and techniques influenced everyone. They were Alex Raymond, Milton Caniff, and Hal Foster.

HOWELL: Due to your many years on the *LOIS LANE* comic (and the high quality of the drawing in those comics during your years there), your version of Lois has become the one indelibly stamped on the consciousnesses of at least two generations of comics readers. Do you feel that you were able to make an important contribution to molding the Lois character? What do you feel you brought to Lois that the character had been lacking before? What would a *"Lois Lane"* story drawn by you have in its tone that might be missing in a *"Lois"* story drawn by, say, Curt Swan or John Forte? Would you rather work with the same character over a long period of time (as with Lois), or be switched around?

"The thing that I tried to do with [Lois] was to make her a definite character, with emotions and feelings..."

SCHAFFENBERGER: When I first took over the *"Lois Lane"* feature, Lois had been primarily a background character in the *"Superman"* stories (as done by Wayne Boring, Curt Swan, Al Plastino, and several other artists whom I don't recall right now). The thing that I tried to do with her was to make her a definite character, with emotions and feelings—because it was my impression that she was rather bland and could fade into the woodwork the way she had been done before. So if I made any contribution to the Lois Lane character, it was by making her a definite individual. The basic similarity between the previous versions and mine were the hair-dos—that I was not allowed to change. Would I rather work on the same character or switch around? Well, there is something to be said for both. I prefer working with the same character for the most part because it's easier. Every time you take up a new character, you have to check back on the detail of their costumes, and on the individual character. It's simpler to stick with one and learn to do it well. You know more about what you are doing. The others take a longer time, although it does make for a break in a more relaxed situation when you have other characters to do on occasion. It breaks the monotony.

HOWELL: What do you feel that the genre of the *LOIS LANE* series was? It had humor stories, romance, detective

tales, adventure stories, science fiction, satire, etc. Do you feel that it was an advantage or a disadvantage to work on a series with such a nebulous concept?

SCHAFFENBERGER: I don't think it was that nebulous a concept. It was just stories about a girl reporter; she had good days, she had bad days. She would cover crime assignments, or she could get mixed up in a story which had science fiction elements to it. You just can't have one type of stories about the girl, because that would get too monotonous. I think it was a good concept to get her involved in various and sundry things.

HOWELL: Do you feel that you made any contributions to the cohesiveness of any other characters in the *LOIS LANE* series? Your Lana, for instance, is very distinctive, internally consistent, and different than Lois (she's a flashier dresser, a bit more inclined to use sex appeal to get what she wants, etc.). Your Professor Potter is quite different in attitude than any other depiction of the character, but again, quite internally consistent. With so many versions of the supporting cast of the *"Superman Family"* of titles, do you feel that you were able to make any characters other than Lois distinctively your own, or distinctive at all?

"I didn't care for [Supergirl] that much, and I just had a bad time there."
QUICKLY, "CINDY" CHANGES INTO SUPERGIRL...
SOME "FAIRY GODMOTHER" I TURNED OUT TO BE! I GOT POOR CINDY KICKED OUT OF HER FOSTER HOME! I'LL HAVE TO FLY OVER TO THE DUDE RANCH AND BREAK THE BAD NEWS TO HER!
10

SCHAFFENBERGER: Well, I don't believe—although I can't swear to this—that Lana Lang had appeared in any of the *"Superman"* stories until she appeared in the *LOIS LANE* series. What I did was take the Lana that had been drawn in the *SUPERBOY* series and made her into an adult. I made her more of a minxy character, and a little bit of a trouble-maker, more so than Lois. Lois is the kind of girl who got into trouble inadvertently, either in the process of an attempt to do some good, or whatever. Lana, though, I pictured as more of a meddler. As far as the other characters are concerned, I generally worked from scraps that they gave me from when the character had been drawn before, and either adapted it to become a more modern version, or a version which would be more consistent with the type of art I was doing.

HOWELL: Is your Lois Lane based on anybody? Are your characters in general based on anybody from real life? If not, where do your ideas for character distinction come from? Do you feel you're dealing with character types or characters in your strips? Do your have any opinion, pro or con, about the practice of basing characters on real people for the purposes of differentiation between the characters—and to assure consistency of features and poses (as, say, Milton Caniff does regularly)?

SCHAFFENBERGER: Lois isn't based on anybody from real life. She is just my version of a pretty girl with dark hair. As far as the other characters go, if it's a new one, to be created by me, then I base the character on the personality of the individual as it comes out in the story, like an absent-minded professor type or what-have-you. One exception to that might be Perry White, whom I always tried to draw to look as much as possible like Mort Weisinger—and still not be sued.

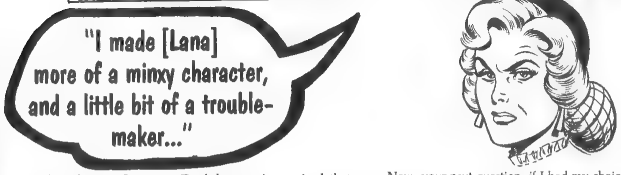
HOWELL: When you left *LOIS LANE,* you were shifted over to *"Supergirl."* Was that by your own choice? Did you feel that you were getting tired of Lois and wanted new challenges? If so, did *"Supergirl"* present any new challenges? Was that the strip which you would have requested to be moved to? If not, then was there a strip you would have requested (and why)? How did you enjoy (or not enjoy) drawing Supergirl's adventures—especially since the character had been firmly established visually in someone else's (Jim Mooney's) style? Do you feel that you were able to overcome that?

SCHAFFENBERGER: It was definitely not my own choice to be moved off the *LOIS LANE* comic. That was not the case at all. When I was shifted over from *LOIS LANE* over to *"Supergirl,"* there were big changes going on in the upper management at DC. The old guard was leaving (or being pushed out—I don't know which). Carmine Infantino took over. He shifted me from *LOIS LANE* to *"Supergirl."* I was never happy doing *"Supergirl."* I didn't care for the character that much, and I just had a bad time there. I did the *"Supergirl"* series for a year or two, and then I left DC for about two years. (I didn't really leave, I just wasn't getting any more work from them, so I went around and was doing Archie comics for a while.) I worked for several other publications, until I got a call from DC to come back and do some romance stories—of which I did two or three —and then they put me on *JIMMY OLSEN.*

"Supergirl" was, as you say, firmly established by Jim Mooney, and I had difficulties doing it. I was not happy with it at all. They had shifted *LOIS* over to (I believe) Mike Sekowsky[1], and the whole book took on a new look which I was not at all happy with. They had a back feature running in there—I think it was *"Rose and the Thorn,"* or something like that—which in my opinion was pure garbage. I was happy, really, to be getting away from it for a while.

HOWELL: You once mentioned that you thought your work was more realistic than the Fawcett work of C.C.

NEXT MOMENT, A FURIOUS HAIR-PULLING CONTEST ENSUES...
MURDERESS! I'LL TEACH YOU TO TRY TO POISON ME!
;GASP;! UPSTART! HOW DARE YOU PULL MY HAIR? I'LL TEAR YOURS OUT BY THE ROOTS!



Beck and Peter Costanza. Doubtless you've noticed that the trend towards realism in comics art has gone much further in the past ten years. Do you feel that realism in comics art (to the degree of photo-realism) helps or impedes a story's impact? If you had the choice to create your drawing style over again from scratch, would you opt for greater realism than you presently display? What do you feel the virtues of a more exaggerated, cartoony style are? Do you feel that your style allows greater expressiveness (and thus communication) than a drawing style which eschews archetype and exaggeration-to-make-the-story's-point? One of our previous interview subjects ventured the opinion that he thought that the cartoony, less realistic style of drawing had lost popularity because the readers were getting lazier and lazier and wanted to put less time and effort into visually "translating" the story, so the more like "real life" it was, the better. Would you agree or disagree with that estimation?

SCHAFFENBERGER: That question may require several different answers. I'll give them to you one at a time. I thought my work was more realistic than the Fawcett work of C.C. Beck and Pete Costanza, but that may only be my opinion. I think my background characters, my secondary characters, tended to be less cartoony than those of Beck and Costanza, but, as I say, that's only my opinion.

I don't think you can ever get photo-realism in the comics, as comics is line art, and there is no line in nature —or in photography either, for that matter. I don't think we will ever get to actual photo-realism—but I don't feel that that would help or impede the story one way or the other. It's telling the story that is the main thing—what means you use are up to you.

Now, your next question: if I had my choice to create my drawing style over again from scratch, would I opt for greater realism than I presently display? I doubt that. Your style develops out of what you are and what talent the good Lord has given you. I don't think more realism would necessary detract from or enhance whatever my style is. Now about the virtues of a more exaggerated cartoony style are: you can get more humor into the characters and the situations. They are supposed to be comic books, but most of them are not comic any more.

Do I feel that my style allows greater expressiveness? Very difficult question to answer. It is my opinion that the main thing in comics is to tell the story clearly and with good drawing, as good drawing as you are capable of—which is basically what I try to do.

As for the opinion that the less realistic style has lost popularity because of lazy readers, I believe that that's a lot of nonsense. Styles change in everything—in clothing, in life styles, in any number of ways. One guy comes along and draws realistically and sells, then the editors and the publishers say, "Ah! That's the secret!" Everybody then gets to draw realistically. Then, if a comic comes along that is real cartoony, say for instance a *BEETLE BAILEY* or a *HAGAR THE HORRIBLE*, and that starts selling really big, then everyone starts drawing more cartoony figures. We don't have a choice. The choice is always that of the editor or publisher.

HOWELL: As opposed to most comics work (at least that of the present crop of artists), your work seems to center on the characters' personalities and their expressions and reactions. Is this a realistic reflection of your own interests in story-telling (and thus your evaluation of what would make the story the most interesting to the reader)? Would

you be interested in doing more action-oriented story-telling?

SCHAFFENBERGER: No, I am quite happy with the set-up that I have now—you know, developing personality, but with some action thrown in (though you have to draw what the script calls for). If the character is supposed to be angry and you draw his face as if he is laughing, it's poor drawing and poor illustration. I'm reminded of George Burns' analysis of acting: He said that if you knock on the door and somebody says come in and you go in, you are a good actor. If he says come in and you just stand there, then you are stupid—and not a good actor.

HOWELL: You've worked on many different genres of comics, including super-hero, adventure, mystery, humor, and romance. What do you feel your work is most suited to? Least? Why?

SCHAFFENBERGER: Well, I think that what I am doing now combines all of those things. In *SUPERBOY* there is some super-heroics, some mystery, some humor, and some romance. I think I have the best of all worlds in this situation, since I get a chance to do it all.

HOWELL: What was your role in the creation of the Magicman character for ACG?

SCHAFFENBERGER: I had desk space down at ACG, and the editor, Richard Hughes asked me to work up some super-heroes for ACG because the super-heroes were coming back in. (This was back in the 1960s.) I did some covers for those books, but I never did any of the inside pages. I just developed the costume more or less along the lines that Dick suggested.

HOWELL: You once described the *"Lois Lane"* stories (or at least your own view of the *"Lois Lane"* stories) as "sophisticated parodies of normal adult social interactions." Could you elaborate on this?

SCHAFFENBERGER: I don't know if it needs elaboration at all. All I am trying to do is to approach a story as if it were to be seen on the screen or on television. People act and react to each other, and I try to get that into my drawing. When I say "sophisticated," I mean that I don't draw cardboard characters who deliver their lines without reacting to each other or the situation—they move (or I try to make them move) like real people in that situation.

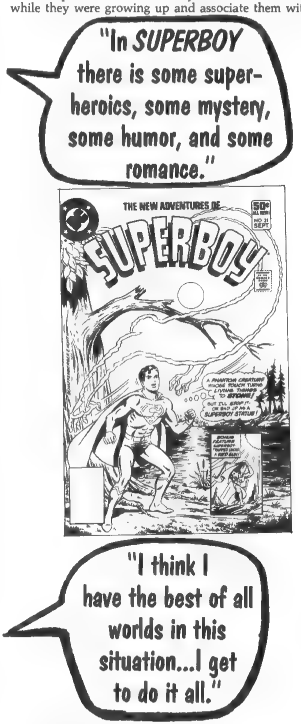
HOWELL: What would your "ideal" comics series be like?

SCHAFFENBERGER: The ideal comics series would take place in a coal mine at midnight or at the South Pole during a white-out blizzard with nothing but balloons coming down. Talking a little more seriously, I don't think that there is an ideal comics series. I am happy with the one I am doing now. If the idea ever comes along, I will be sure to let you know.

HOWELL: Do you read comics anymore?

SCHAFFENBERGER: I will have to be honest with you. I have never been a reader of comic books. I check them out occasionally, and see what is being done, look at what kind of art work is being done, but for the most part I have never read a comic book. I've said before in other interviews that comic books are my livelihood, not my life. Comics are a thousand per cent better now than they were back when I first started in 1941—at least in the art work. The comics are in some ways not as interesting to me anymore, though, because they take themselves a little bit too seriously.

HOWELL: Today at DC, you seem to have gotten classified as a "nostalgia artist" (who works on the 1950s *"Mr. and Mrs. Superman"* series and the 1960s *"In-Between Years"* and *SUPERBOY* series). Do you think that this is just a simple coincidence, or the DC editorial staff's opinion of how to best utilize your artistic skills? (Could this maybe be caused by the fact that most of the editors up there used to read your *LOIS LANE* comics while they were growing up and associate them with the 1960s Weisinger comics—especially since you're just as good now as you were then?) What age group do you feel your work appeals to?


"In SUPERBOY there is some super-heroics, some mystery, some humor, and some romance."
THE NEW ADVENTURES OF
SUPERBOY
"I think I have the best of all worlds in this situation...I get to do it all."

SCHAFFENBERGER: I guess your theory about my being a nostalgia artist is probably true to a degree. I have been in the business for forty years, and with Superboy, for instance, the powers-that-be had a conference and decided that from here on in Superman will always be 29 years old and Superboy will be 16 years old—so in a sense, I am

drawing things that go back 13 years. And in the *"Mr. and Mrs. Superman"* series, it goes back to the 1950s. (Why they picked that date, I don't know, but that's the way the story is written.) As far as some of the editors having grown up on my stuff back in the early days, that's quite true—but on the other hand, the editor that I work for almost exclusively now is Julie Schwartz, and he is older than I am and has been in the business longer than I have. As to what age group I am appealing to or drawing for, I picture the average reader of my work as being 14 to 16 years old.

HOWELL: What direction do you feel comics are heading in? Do you see yourself working in comics in ten years? Do you see there being comics (as we know them now) in ten years? Do you get involved in the business end of comics at all? Would you want to?

SCHAFFENBERGER: I have no idea which direction comics are heading in now. I am hopeful that they will get into the educational field more deeply than they ever have, but I have been saying that for twenty years and nothing has happened yet. As long as comics are willing to pay me, I don't see why I shouldn't be involved with them in the next ten, twenty years. As long as they are still putting out *"Superman"* movies which sell tickets like the proverbial hot cakes, I imagine we will still have *"Superman"* comic books.

I wouldn't really want to get involved in the business end of comics at this stage of the game. I just passed my 60th birthday and am not looking for any new worlds to conquer at this point.

HOWELL: Describe a typical Kurt Schaffenberger work day. What tools do you use? Do they change for various aspects of your art work? Have they changed over the years? Do you miss inking your own work (as much as some of us miss seeing it)? Do you feel that you're a better penciller or inker? Do you separate the two jobs at all? Do

THANKS, OSCAR! WE HAVEN'T COMPLETED OUR WEDDING PLANS YET...BUT IT'S GOOD TO KNOW WE'LL HAVE METROPOLIS'S BEST WEATHERMAN ON OUR SIDE!
-PSSST- LOIS...
REMEMBER A FEW YEARS AGO WHEN MY RIVAL ON THE OTHER NETWORK HELD A FAMOUS SINGER'S WEDDING LIVE ON HIS TALK SHOW...
...IN FRONT OF 30 MILLION VIEWERS?
OH, NO, YOU DON'T, JOHNNY NEVADA!
"You have to be an expert observer if you are an artist."

you like your own work better when inked by anyone in particular (yourself included)? Would you be interested in writing any of your own work? Coloring it?

SCHAFFENBERGER: Generally, I get up somewhere between 8:00 and 9:00 in the morning, have a leisurely breakfast, read my paper, and generally get to the studio about 9:30 or so. I work until about 1:30, then I take about an hour's lunch break, then go back to the studio and work until my wife comes home (which is generally about 5:30). Then we sit down and have a leisurely cocktail before dinner—and then we have dinner, after which I like to sit in my favorite recliner, push it back, snooze for about an hour, then go back to the studio (generally about 8:00-8:30) and work until just before 11:00. Then I go back to the living room, turn on the television and watch man's latest inhumanity to man. Then I will generally watch the Johnny Carson show. Then I hit the sack again about 1:30 or so.

When I am pencilling, I generally work with a 3H pencil to rough out the work, and then—depending on the humidity—I will use a 2H or an H pencil to finish the work off. The humidity is a factor when working because it does affect the paper. You would need a softer pencil when working in humid conditions, such as during the Summertime.

I miss inking my own work in the sense that it was more of a change to be inking one day and pencilling during the other, but they seduced me with money and I am content just doing the pencils now. As all company publishers pay less for inkers than they do for pencillers—and from what they tell me at DC, they have a plethora of inkers and not enough pencillers—I am taking the money and running. I am content with Dave Hunt's inking of my work. I do believe, however, that the best inker for Schaffenberger's pencils has always been and will always be Schaffenberger—but that ain't the way it's going. As far as writing or coloring my work: no, I am not in the least interested in that.

HOWELL: Your Lois Lane was oné of the archetypal feminine images of 1960s comics, but your communication of her "femininity" was always very subtle. What qualities or attitudes did your Lois display that made her inarguably a woman? Do you think about these subtle depictions of body postures, expressions, etc., as you are drawing the characters, or are they part of your style, absorbed by osmosis in real life, and brought almost unconsciously into play in your work? Do you feel that the most effective communication of character and attitude comes from artists who are expert observers?

SCHAFFENBERGER: I don't know how subtle my communications of Lois' femininity were. A woman uses different gestures and different attitudes than a man does. I just figure that if I'm drawing a woman, her attitudes and gestures should be different from those of a man. How well I succeed, I don't know. It's been a conscious effort, though, not brought unconsciously into play, as you put it. You have to be an expert observer if you are an artist. You look at people, you see what kind of attitudes and gestures they use, then you try and incorporate them into your work.

HOWELL: Do you see any difference (in either expertise or attitude) between your Fawcett work and your *LOIS LANE* work? How about between your *LOIS* work and your present *SUPERBOY* work?

SCHAFFENBERGER: I certainly hope that from an art standpoint, my present work is a hell of a lot better, because if it isn't, I'm in the wrong racket. I should go about opening Schaffenberger's Pizzaria, Hofbrau House and Chinese Garden. I believe there is a degree of better art and more maturing in the work that I do today than in what I did then—at least I hope so. ●

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CONSOLIDATED MAGAZINES, INC.

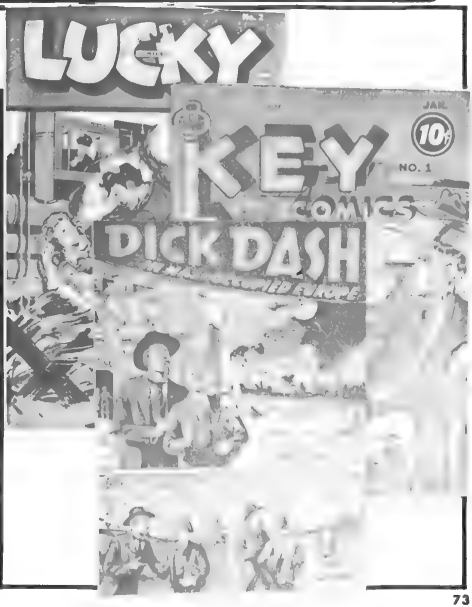
Chuck Wooley

A person known as J. A. Ruby (whose real name may have been Joseph A. Rubinstein) was the publisher of Lucky Comics and Key Comics, the only two titles ever issued by Consolidated Magazines, Inc. Both titles had their first issues appear in January, 1944, and both last saw print with their fifth number in August, 1946. Over a period of 2½ years, then, Consolidated issued a total of ten comic books.

Although little know today, Ruby's publications are nonetheless remarkable remembrances of a unique and critical era in American and World history. They are signficant on a number of levels, the most obvious of which is their impressive visual renderings.

During an era that saw many of the best comic artists in the Armed Forces, Consolidated managed to fill its pages with top quality artwork. Although some of the most extraordinary stories are not signed, the work of such people as H. C. Kiefer, Leonard Starr, Chic Stone, Walter Johnson and Burton Geller (who was best known for his work on EC's Tiny Tot Comics) grace many of the pages. Alonzo (also known as Lon) did several excellent stories, while Marv Lev, Ken Brickley and Novo also turned in interesting material.

The single most interesting artistic element, however, would have to be the perspectives utilized in various individual panels. The artists were clearly very concerned with depicting exactly



what the story narrative called for, which resulted in some incredible panel compositions. In one such instance two people in the foreground of a room hold a discussion . . . a normal enough occurrence, except that the actual room is impossibly huge in relation to its occupants. In another ostensibly normal panel, a man is dragging a person down a hallway. The figures are rendered in such a way, however, that the one in the foreground appears to be at least twelve feet tall, while the one in the background — who is doing the dragging — is about three feet tall. At first glance the panel seems plausible, but upon closer inspection it looks like a dwarf is dragging a giant . . . even though the two figures had previously been depicted as being of roughly comparable height.

These strange perspectives are much more than simply poor artwork, however, in that they are beguilingly captivating, much like the works of M. C. Escher. Just as an Escher drawing may look perfectly plausible until the viewer realizes that Escher's water trough is flowing both uphill and downhill simultaneously, in a similar way the unique perspective of many of Consolidated Magazines, Inc.'s panels looks very plausible . . . until one actually stops to study them. Then their composition seems both possible and impossible at the same instant. This technique works well because the panels make sense and are coherent if they are considered strictly on their own terms. When one stops to think, however, that the small apartment building simply could not have interior rooms of gargantuan dimension, or that the giant and the dwarf were of comparable height a few panels earlier, then the Escher effect comes into play.

The captivating artwork is simply one of the many enjoyable elements that make up a Consolidated Magazines, Inc. comic, however. Just as important to the success (critical, if not financial) of LUCKY and KEY COMICS was the exceptional characterization that went into the stories. The characters were extremely believable, even though they were created during an era that was often dependent upon blatant stereotypes to tell a narrative. Further, the motivations give to the characters were excellent, and their lives progressed somewhat realistically from number to number. Thus in LUCKY COMICS' premier number, Lucky Starr, cameraman and patriot, expresses some discomfort over remaining a civilian. He fails to enlist in the Armed Forces solely because he feels he owes it to his business partner to remain and uphold his share of the business. When the second issue of LUCKY COMICS (dated Summer 1945, 1½ years later) appears, however, Lucky Starr has his guilt eased by being drafted and made into a newsreel cameraman! Thus, Lucky manages to do his patriotic duty while yet upholding his personal business commitments. Further, by the time Lucky settles back into civilian life (by #5) his WWII partnership had somehow dissolved (like so many other WWII-interrupted business relationships), and he was working for a newspaper editor.

In a similar way we watched the maturation of Key Comic's Dick Dash. In #1, Dick is an American school boy in France (his father works in Paris) whose school becomes involved in the Nazi occupation. Dick is a forceful young preppie who believes in honesty and fair play and fighting for the defense of one's beliefs. (He also seems to be related in someway to Dash Dartwell, the Harvard (that's Dravrah) speed freak from AMAZING-MAN COMICS.) After outwitting the Nazi occupation in Key's first issue, Dick Dash was returned to America by #3, where he "cleans up" a brutal hazing gang at his latest prep school. The close of Dick's story in #3, however, mentions that Dick will soon be off to China to search for his father. Displaying admirable continuity, issues #4 and #5 detail Dick's trip to China, which involves steps in Molbolia and along the Russian border (where Dick's uncle, John, displays his knowledge of slang Russian with the friendly Russian border patrol). Exhibiting remarkable continuity for the times, the strip reunites Dick with his missing father shortly before the close of Dick's last story in the last issue of KEY COMICS.

Consolidated Magazines, Inc., then, was graced with extraordinary visuals and superb characterization. How did a very minor publisher manage this? Simple. Ruby simply relied upon Lloyd Jacquet and his talented Funnies, Inc. shop to provide the material for him. The same man who edited the first DC comics (NEW FUN COMICS), and who packaged the very first Marvel comic (MARVEL COMICS) was apparently responsible for the contents of Consolidated Magazines, Inc. as well. In fact, the Junior strip in LUCKY COMICS #1 (not to be confused with the very different Junior issued by Victor Fox a few years later) even mentions a Red Ravens baseball team! (RED RAVEN, for those unfamiliar with Marvel's early history, was the second title that Marvel ever issued . . . it, like LUCKY COMICS, KEY COMICS, and AMAZING-MAN COMICS, was packaged by Lloyd Jacquet.)

Lloyd obviously put a lot of thought into these two titles, keeping strict continuity throughout their highly irregular publishing schedules (a remarkable feat for the period). He also tried to make their somewhat peculiar titles more relevant to their contents. (How, for example, could someone consider the cover of LUCKY COMICS #2 to be lucky? It depicts Bobbie, the junior high heroine, standing in flames while the evil Jake tries to strangle her and a firemen throws axes in her direction.) Perhaps in order to compensate for this unusual title, LUCKY COMICS gradually developed features like "LUCKY LUCRE", "LUCKY YOU", and "GOOD AND BAD LUCK." KEY COMICS followed suit with "KEY KORN", "KEY-LINES", "TOMMY'S TIME KEY", and "MUSICAL KEY SERIES" (based on operas, this was the most creative title spin-off for Consolidated).

In sum, then, Consolidated had a great deal going for it. It was packaged by the renowned Lloyd Jacquet, who created for Consolidated an excellent group of comics. They were graced with remarkable art, carefully constructed stories, and exceptional characterization. Of even greater importance, however, is the fact that Consolidated's comics stand as a graphic reflection of one of the most critical eras in all of World history; World War II and post-War II.

The world was changing. Incredibly powerful forces were being unleashed. Jacquet and Consolidated knew this, and published stories which dealt bluntly with the potentialities of the post-WWII world. Atomic power, a startling new force, suddenly had the capability to change reality! The pages of KEY and LUCKY made this clear, and chronicled the basic American change from WWII to the post-WWII noir period.

One of the homefront, LUCKY and KEY found reflections of WWII in the activities of criminals, who were busy taking advantage of "the new order" by stealing ration books. The times were also reflected in the treatment of the police, who in one story simply stand

about and watch as an incarcerated murder suspect has a heart attack and dies. No one makes the slightest effort to aid him, much less to acquire for him the medical attention which might save his life.

It was a brutal era. Overseas Nazis were coolly caught unaware and shot to death, while captured Japanese soldiers were brutalized "off-screen." It was also a time of espionage, and in one amazing story we actually witness Nazi spies leaving their U-Boat and entering America through Coney Island!

It was atomics that were changing the world, however, and the pages of Consolidated's comics contained many Atomic elements. In one story the Key manages to get the groundwork for the Manhattan project from a scientist in occupied Europe. In another, three evil scientists, working in the Bronx on the "Brooklyn Project," try to smash all 92 known elements at once . . . resulting in John Quincy Atom, a creature shaped like a water droplet, and somewhat reminiscent of Roddy Kilowatt. Atomic themes were likewise in used into a number of the other stories.

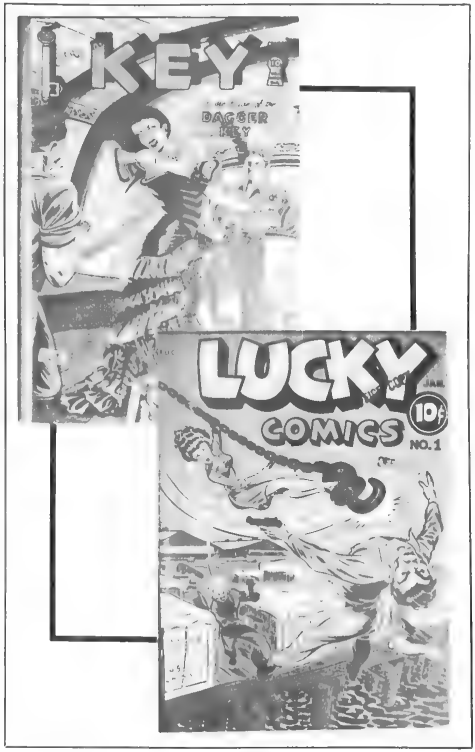
After WWII was won by the Allies it took some time to change the mood of the country from wartime activities to peacetime pursuits. Hollywood reflected this in their "film noir" movies, and in the comics the period was at least partially captured in the narratives of Consolidated.

A dark atmosphere hung over some of the stories, including one pirate tale that almost looks like it was pencilled by S. Clay Wilson. Other narratives were very brutal. Still others (particularly Will O' The Wisp) were blatantly erotic. And even Death, in a personified form, became a narrator/participant in one series of stories.

One final **gestalt** combines with all of the above to make LUCKY COMICS and KEY COMICS truly exceptional. For aside from their many other elements, the stories were told by utilizing classic themes of fantasy — as well as the traditional sex and violence.

For example, in Consolidated's comics there were drinking cups made from the skulls of human victims, plus graphic torture, slavery, and murder by guns, swords, poison and strangulation. There were harems, dancing girls, and transvestism. There were ancient Romans, chariot races, the Sword of Ghenghis Khan, the Ring of Darius the Great, Mongolians, and native islanders with strange customs. There was also Hollywood, drug use, time travel, and science fiction.

A complete collection of Consolidated Magazines, Inc.'s ten comics, then, would form a minor treasure trove. The stories are action-packed, exceptionally drawn and carefully edited, as well as directly reflective of World War II. When one further considers that all of this is combined with the many fantasy themes mentioned above, one must conclude that the little known comics of J. A. Ruby are worthy of far more attention than they have received. They are an adventure collector's delight!



Animated Antics

by Jim Korkis

THE AGONY AND THE ECSTACY

Two Animation Books Reviewed

With no fanfare, a small West Coast book company released this new book about Disney. Almost a year later, it appeared in the B. Dalton Pickwick bookstores hidden next to a new Betty Davis biography. No reviews of this book have appeared other than a short blurb in the L.A. Times; it is not stocked by distributors who normally carry Disney related books; it will never be reprinted in paperback.

WALT by Charles Shows is something of a curiosity. A new Disney book not hampered by studio restrictions that supposedly tells the intimate backstage story of the workings of Disney Studios would seem to be guaranteed success. After all, within the last twenty years there have been a dozen different biographies published about Uncle Walt. The interest in his life and work shows no sign of abating. The eleven dollar price tag on this book is reasonable and it boasts the added inducements of a striking front cover illustration of Walt, a short introduction by William Hanna of Hanna-Barbera, and a back cover which showcases an autographed photo of Walt. Shows' credits as a writer include the book "Time for Beany", animation work at Hanna-Barbera, and, of course, his work at Disney. All of the elements of a successful book seem to exist and yet the book is a failure in too many areas.

The book is hampered by a common problem of many biographers — the tendency to embellish their importance in the events they are reporting. I have no doubt Shows made many valuable contributions to story development while working at Disney, but, the book seems to focus on how wonderful and creative all of his work was out of perspective to its real importance. It seems that if Shows' work was that critical then either Shows would never have left Disney or his name would be better known to Disney Fandom. He speaks proudly of his live action compilation films (of children around the world) for the Mickey Mouse Club but doesn't mention that this sequence was one of the first items cut when the show had to be revamped due to low ratings.

The book is not really a biography of Walt but a series of unrelated anecdotes about Shows own experiences at the Disney Studio. Each anecdote has its own bold face title followed by a page or so of large type. The purpose of some of these anecdotes is unclear as too many of them do not deal with Disney but with some unrelated adventure of Shows or some interesting sidelight about Bob Hope or Humphrey Bogart.

The stories are poorly documented, as if Shows is merely recounting his memory of the incident for a group of friends rather than writing a history that demands a rechecking of facts and names. The situation is not helped by his coyly avoiding names of many of the other staff members involved in some of the stories. It is understandable that he might not know the name of Floyd Norman, the "lone negro" at Disney Studio, or that he did not wish to hurt someone by identifying the anonymous drunk who was sleeping behind a stack of storyboards. But is there really a good reason why the well-known Ward Kimball, creator of the famed Firehouse Five band among other accomplishments, is called "Fred" and why the writer of the popular children's story LITTLE TOOT is merely referred to as "a writer"? When he does need to mention an employee by name he christens them with pseudonyms like Melvin or Marvin. Very rarely does a real name, like Ken Hultgren or Ham Luske appear and even when they do Shows doesn't always connect that person with his importance at the studio.

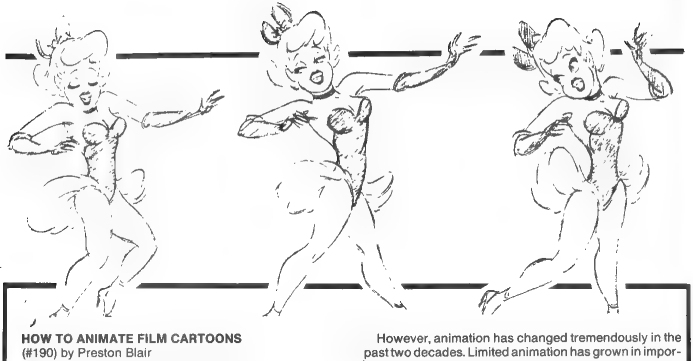
Reinforcing this impression of a casual trip down memory lane is Shows lack of a chronological structure. His discussion of his work on Hanna-Barbera's ALICE IN WONDERLAND special precedes his explanation of his work on the Mickey Mouse Club which finished its tv run before the special appeared. Discussion of sequences from the DISNEYLAND tv show come before his telling of the creation of Disneyland and the development of the Disneyland tv show to help finance the park. It's not until the final chapter that Shows even recaps the life of Disney, information that might have helped a reader unfamiliar with Disney Lore to understand the order of events described in the book. Even then it is only a cursory, six page retelling.

Several critics have complained about recent biographies which quote actual conversations; their contention is it does a disservice to a person to paraphrase words in his mouth. Shows not only recreates Walt's talks with him from memory but also recreates conversations he only heard third hand from other sources. As a storyteller, Shows must have felt this method was more interesting for the reader. It is disturbing in a book that claims the historical insight of being "an intimate first-hand look behind the scenes" which will answer the question, "What was Disney **really** like?"

Unfortunately books of misinformation are used just as frequently as sources for future books and articles as are other better-researched tomes. For many years, part of the Pentagon tour in Washington included the interesting bit of trivia that Disney was dishonorably discharged from the Army. Disney was never in the Army. He tried to enlist when he was only fifteen but was rejected and instead served in the Red Cross where he drove an ambulance. Needless to add, Disney could not have been dishonorably discharged since he never served in the first place It is my fear that Shows book, by its sloppy and over generalized presentation, will add more misinformation to a man already shrouded in too many mysteries.

Leo D'Usseau ("Dusso") supplies the strangest artwork I've seen in quite awhile. His style is reminiscent of many cartoonists of the 1950s such as Virgil Partch because there is a stiffness about his characters that has fallen out of favor among more modern cartoonists. He seems to be a competent artist whose style is totally inappropriate to illustrate Shows' anecdotes. His drawing shows little understanding of Disney or Disney's product. Dusso's depiction of a storyboard bears scant resemblance to the actual object despite the fact that many picture references were available in a variety of easily obtainable sources. His cover illustration is very effective but his caricature of Uncle Walt on the inside of the book borders on being cruel. For some reason, Dusso's Walt sports a Terry-Thomas gap in his front teeth that was not present in the Real McCoy. It is almost as if Dusso was trying to recreate a feeling of wackiness but did not wish to be bothered by too much research. If this was the case his artwork is a perfect match for Shows' text.

Those who are unfamiliar with Uncle Walt would be better served picking up a copy of **WALT DISNEY: AN AMERICAN ORIGINAL** by Bob Thomas. Thomas knew and understood his subject and his book is filled with factual information as well as personal insights about Walt. WALT by Shows will only have value for the Disney completist who is willing to shift through the reams of poorly recorded memories in his search for some new gem of questionable truth. There are still many untold stories of life at the Disney Studio and I hope Shows' book won't discourage others from publishing those experiences.



HOW TO ANIMATE FILM CARTOONS
(#190) by Preston Blair
(Walter Foster Art Books, 38 pages, $2.00)
Distributed by: Walter T. Foster Art Books
430 West Sixth Street
Tustin, California 92680

Preston Blair is one of those little known stars of animation. He worked at the Disney Studios on **PINOCCHIO, BAMBI,** and **FANTASIA** where he helped animate the dancing hippos and Mickey as the Sorcerer's Apprentice. Later he moved over to MGM where he was teamed with Tex Avery. For Avery, he animated — without assistance of rotoscoping the Red Hot Riding Hood character that appeared in several of Avery's shorts. Fortunately, Mr. Blair is still well and active and, thanks to two books from Walter Foster, he can still share his knowledge with others.

The Walter Foster Art Books are those large (approximately 10" by 13") "How To Draw" books that fill the racks in local art stores. Over 200 of these books exist including a very simplistic book by Foster himself entitled **ANIMATED CARTOONS FOR THE BEGINNER** (#25) which manages to expand perhaps two pages of general information into thirty-two and resembles a coloring book more than a technical manual.

However, at the same time Foster also published **ANIMATION** (#26) by Preston Blair. The book was published just after Blair's work at MGM and is filled with valuable basic information as well as illustrations reminiscent of the characters he did for Avery. A modified Screwy Squirrel and "George" character pop up on page twelve while Red Hot Riding Hood pops up in the centerfold. There is even a homage to Avery himself as Blair uses a caricature of that animator to demonstrate the wild exaggeration of surprise in a cartoon "take". For a beginning animator, the book supplies the necessary information to get started as well as the insight that animation is more than just drawing funny pictures. For the animation historian, this book is a treasure trove of memories as well as an insight into how animation used to be done.

However, animation has changed tremendously in the past two decades. Limited animation has grown in importance, realistic humans have too often replaced the funny animals of yore, and people seem better able to absorb technical data.

Thankfully, Mr. Blair has once again been pressed into service to update the information in his previous book. HOW TO ANIMATE FILM CARTOONS (#190) appeared last year and in terms of sheer information, it outshines Blair's previous book. Pages are quite literally crammed with information that expands Blair's previous discussion of the topic as well as providing new information explaining such things as pan backgrounds, overlays and the wave principle. If those words sound intimidating, this book cuts them down to understandable size. The material is clearly explained without an excess of technical jargon. With a little effort even a novice can understand how it all works.

Once again, this writing is accompanied by Blair's illustrations, but these new drawings emphasize a more realistic portrayal of animals and humans. The firm ink line and exaggerated characters of the former book have been replaced with a sketchy style and subject matter that too often lacks the humor and life of his previous drawings. Like the earlier book, he uses a Red Hot Riding Hood character to demonstrate how to animate a dance step but this time she has lost several pounds, her coyness, and some indefinable feeling. Unwittingly, Blair has made a comment on modern animation. The drawing is still quite well rendered but it fails to project that sense of life which is the very definition of the word animation. Craftsmanship has not been lost but an attitude of outrageous fun seems to have been misplaced. However, this is a minor quibble about a very find book that may help teach a new generation of animators that limited animation does not have to mean a limited imagination nor limited artistic skill.

Both of the Blair books are still available and would be inexpensive but rewarding additions to any animation library.

STRIP TEASE

Rick Norwood

In this column we take an overview of the current story strips. I count 41 of them, which is plenty. The problem with story strips today is not too little quantity but too little quality.

Another writer might come up with a different count. It seems clear to me that **Doonesbury** is a humor strip that does stories, while **Gasoline Alley** is a story strip that does humor. It is a judgement call. Then, there are strips like Dan Savage which I do not list because I have never seen them, though they are listed in Editor and Publisher magazine. I do not count imports like **Air Hawks** and **Modesty Blaise**. And I am not counting the **Incredible Hulk**, which I think has gone under, though it is entirely possible that it is limping along in a handful of papers.

So, 41 strips, give or take a few. Seven detectives, six spacemen, two super-heroes, two cowboys, two orphans, two jungle heroes, one costumed adventurer, one costumed jungle hero, one knight, one secret agent, one doctor, one soldier, an inspirational strip, an outdoors strip, a sports strip, a family strip, a kung fu strip, and nine soap operas.

I am afraid I will have to pass on the soap operas. I don't read them. Guest reviews are welcome. As for the artwork, **Barbara Cartland's Romances** is pretty, by Grey Morrow. **Winnie Winkle** is interesting, by the Joe Kubert studio. **Brenda Starr** is sometimes eye catching, by Ramona Fradon, who did better work on **Metamorpho**. **Judge Parker**, **Rex Morgan**, **Juliet Jones**, **Mary Worth** and **Apt. 3-G** are dull. And **Dallas** is incompetent.

I have already commented on six strips that I consider first rate in column number one: one cowboy, one knight, one spaceman, one jungle hero, one soldier, and a family strip.

This leaves an awful lot of strips in the mediocre to wretched class. Why do the syndicates accept bad strips and reject good ones? I have seen outstanding strips published here and there which the syndicates turned down, strips by artists like Al Williamson, for example. (I suggest one reason that this happens in the Strip News section.) Meanwhile, keep in mind that the last successful, long running, first rate, original story strip started thirty-five years ago. This would seem to me to indicate to the most casual observer that the syndicates are doing something wrong. Readers don't want story strips, the syndicates will reply. Then, I ask, why are story strips in virtually every newspaper in the country?

Dr. Kildare, **Brick Bradford**, and **Tim Tyler's Luck** are long running strips which are mildly entertaining, but with no excitement, and which are carried in a vanishingly small number of papers. I run across one of these once every few years, and it doesn't seem to have changed at all since the last time.

Palooka, **Mark Trail**, and **Gil Thorpe** are a bit more popular, but are so bland and inoffensive that I do not remember what I have read five minutes after I have read them. No one ever made the Hall of Fame by not offending anyone.

At the very bottom of the barrel, we have **Flash Gordon**, **Buck Rogers**, and **Buzz Sawyer**. These were once great strips. Well — maybe Buck was never "great", but he used to be a whole lot better than he is now.

FLASH GORDON is at the tender mercies of Dan Barry, who was recently locked up for income tax evasion. After a long stretch of rewritten versions of earlier adventures,

MARK TRAIL
By ED DODD
YOU'RE A FINE-LOOKING YOUNG FELLOW!
TRINA, THIS IS MARK TRAIL!
HI, TRINA!
I SAW YOU COME IN... IT SEEMS THAT MY SON LEON HAS TAKEN A FANCY TO YOU!
LEON

we are now getting plots swiped from old movies. A recent shark boy story is very like "Beyond the Reef", a grade B movie currently on the cable. A mystical time-travel story echoes "the force" from **Star Wars**. Here are some quotes from that story: "Our Earth is yet young . . . unsullied by man's 'progress'! You must have noticed our smokeless vehicles — needing no propulsion!" Right. A vehicle with no propulsion does not move. Here is another one: "We had long since learned to cancel gravity — before your engines were to come!" A writer should

FLASH GORDON
By DAN BERRY
THE PEOPLE OF KAMBRI ARE HAVING A TASTE OF FREEDOM!
THE QUESTION IS, DO WE ABANDON THEM TO MING'S TYRANNY NOW?
WE'D LIKE TO LIBERATE ALL OF HIS EMPIRE, FLASH!
BUT ALL-OUT WAR?!
WITH DEATH RAYS ON BOTH SIDES, ALL LIFE ON MONGO IS IN THE BALANCE!
TRUE! BUT WILL MING RISK THAT FOR A TINY ISLAND? I WONDER!

master the tenses of the English language before he messes with time travel. In this story, Flash acquires precognition and telepathy — powers forgotten in the next story.

No continuity, no character, no science, and a minimal acquaintance with the English language.

I loved this strip. How dare they trash something I love.

BUCK ROGERS. This was, at first, the new, camp Buck Rogers. The idea of camp is to make the reader feel smart and sophisticated as he laughs at how bad your story is. I have never found this amusing. When the Buck Rogers strip was revived in 1979, it was pure camp. Grey Morrow, who can do beautiful work, drew it with large panels, bright colors, crude brushstrokes. The first story, by Jim Lawrence, was about a space vampire named Yoryx. It went downhill from there.

Now the script is by Carry Bates, and is a little bit better, but still far from good. The current story line, for example, involves Buck time traveling to the year 1947, only to discover that his father may be a Nazi spy.

This story did have one cute line in it. The police grab Buck and frisk him, finding a ray gun in his pocket. Says

THE LONE RANGER by Bates & Heath
Hear THE LONE RANGER on radio, Fridays 6:30 p.m. — 1230-K-NUZ
ELLSWORTH, USUALLY A PEACEFUL KANSAS COW TOWN...
WE DON'T WANT NO MORE TROUBLE, SHERIFF!
AND THERE WON'T BE--SOON'S WE TAKE CARE OF THAT POLECAT!
LISTEN UP, ALL OF YOU!
SALOON
FISHER & SON-HARDWARE
THAT MAN IS IN MY CUSTODY! HE STAYS PUT 'TIL HIS FRIEND WYATT EARP GETS HERE FROM WICHITA!

BUZ SAWYER/ by schlensker and granberry
IT WAS NO GHOST I TALKED WITH, JULIE.
THEN WHO WAS I?
DO YOU KNOW A CAESAR GIRALDA?
ONLY BY HEARSAY.
HE AND HIS MOTHER OWN THE WHITE STALLION.
THE MOTHER IS SAID TO BE VERY POSSESSIVE.

one cop to another, "I'll bet he's gonna tell us he's Flash Gordon."

Part of the problem is that a few writers are churning out large numbers of scripts. Carry Bates also does the **Lone Ranger**, plus his comic book work. Jim Lawrence writes **Barbara Cartland**, **Capt. Easy**, **Dallas** and maybe one or two more. Sharman DiVono writes **Star Trek** and **Bruce Lee**. None of these strips are really any good, nor have any of them been especially successful. No one ever made the Hall of Fame by sticking to a known quantity instead of looking for new talent.

For that matter, why are writers in charge of strips at all Every great strip that I can think of was created by an artist.

It's enough to make me give up either horseback riding or Buz Sawyer. Buz Sawyer has got to go.

I have a confession to make. Every now and then I read **Dondi**. My eye will be sliding down the newspaper and **Dondi** will catch me and hold me. This never happens with **Judge Parker** or **Mary Worth**. Irwin Hassen and Bob Oksner must be doing something right. It is, after all, the first duty of a newspaper artist to catch the reader. He may do this and still not be very good. I never said **Dondi** was good. But if the artist fails to catch the reader, no one will ever know whether he is any good or not. **Joe Palooka** might be a great strip. If it is, I'll never know. It never holds my interest.

Annie
—I GUESS I COULD JUST ASK TH' DOGCATCHER IF SANDY'S IN THERE —
—BUT EVEN IF HE IS— I DON'T THINK I HAVE ENOUGH MONEY T' PAY FOR A LICENSE —
—BUT SANDY IS ELSEWHERE— HAVING TROUBLE WITH THE LOCK ON THE DOGNAPPER'S PEN —
YOWP!
—HEAR WHAT, "BULL"? I CAN'T HEAR NOTHIN' OVER THAT RACKET COMIN' FROM TH' PEN!
IT AIN'T THEIR USUAL MISERABLE WAILIN', "RED"! C'MON!
Dick Tracy
WHAT'S WRONG WITH SOLAR POWER, SMITH? BOTHERED THAT YOU DON'T OWN THE SUN?
NATURAL ENERGY
NO
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH SOLAR—SOLAR HEATING IS AN ENERGY ALTERNATIVE ALREADY IN WIDE USE—"
COLLECTORS
LIQUID MEDIUM STORAGE
AUXILIARY HEATER
ROOM HEATER
BUT AS FOR FUSION— THAT'S THE PROCESS THAT POWERS THE SUN.

BUZ SAWYER. I hung onto this strip as long as I could, but with the last adventure, I decided not to collect it any more. Let me give you a quick synopsis of the plot, an maybe you will see why.

Julie sees a white pony in the moonlight. Her husband, Tony, was drowned while riding a white pony in the surf. Is this the ghost of that white pony? No, it is the white pony of a handsome young poet who lives with his mother on a nearby ranch. Julie and Caesar fall in love, but his mother opposes the marriage. Now: 1) a horse throws Julie, who has a brain concussion, causing Caesar to realize how much he loves her; 2) a horse throws Caesar, breaking several ribs, giving Julie a chance to nurse him back to health; 3) a horse throws the mother, killing her, but with her dying breath she gives her blessing to their marriage.

The other orphan of the comic pages, **Annie**, is now written and drawn by Leonard Starr of **On Stage** fame. I do no follow it regularly, I feel the same way about the new **Annie** that I do about the new **Dick Tracy**. People who follow both strips tell me that they are better than ever under their new artists, but they just don't grab me the way the old **Little Orphan Annie** by Harold Gray and the old **Dick Tracy** by Chester Gould did. Maybe the difference is that Gray and Gould believed in what they were doing, and the new people are just putting on a show. When Daddy Warbucks began bad mouthing the oil companies, I knew something was seriously wrong.

I have nothing to say, either good or bad, about **Kerry Drake** or **Steve Roper** or **Captain Easy** or **Rip Kirby**. To my mind, the best of the current detective strips is **Secret**

SUPERHEROES by Kupperberg, Tuska, Colletta
GREAT KRYPTON... NO!
THE EXHIBITION HALL'S BEEN FLOODED WITH GAS--!
--AND WHAT IT'S DONE TO THESE PEOPLE IS HORRIBLE I'LL SEE IF THEY'RE ALL RIGHT--
--AFTER I GET RID OF THE FLAME-G!
P. KUPPERBERG DELBO/ Colletta

Agent Corrigan, by George Evans. I wish I knew a newspaper that carried it.

WORLD'S GREATEST SUPERHEROES FEATURING SUPERMAN. There have been, by my count, nine comic strips based on comic books, four from **DC**, four from **Marvel**, and **Blue Beetle**. Of these the all time best was **Batman**, especially when Jack Schiff and later E. Nelson Bridwell were doing the scripts. The **Superman** strip was rather bad, doing adaptations of comic book stories. Comic book stories do not adapt well to newspaper strips; the pacing is all wrong. The **Wonder Woman** strip is of interest only as a curiosity. The new strip, World's Greatest Etc., features **Superman** in almost every story. It was drawn by George Tuska, an old strip hand, and another example of the preference for known qualities. The script has been by various **DC** house writers: Paul Levitz, Gary Conway, Mike Barr, etc. The main thing wrong with the strip is that nothing of importance can happen. All major developments must take place in the comic books.

The most recent story, by new team Kupperberg and Delbo, features **Superman** and the **Joker**, and is more of the same.

Over at **Marvel**, we have seen **Hulk**, **Conan**, and **Howard the Duck** come and go. The **Hulk** strip was from the first a misguided and poorly drawn amalgam of the comic book and the tv show. **Howard the Duck** had its moments, but not enough of them. I was really excited when the **Conan** strip began, and the first strip was quite good, but nothing memorable happened during the rest of the run. This is a shame. A Buscema **Conan** strip could have been first rate.

Which leaves **Spiderman**. I rather like the **Spiderman** comic strip. It is signed Stan Lee. I am informed that it is really by Stan's brother Larry, but I only believe half of what I hear. If it is by Larry, then Larry has finally learned to write like Stan. The art, by Fred Kida now, has always been clean and colorful. The only complaint I have is that the stories are a little too mundane. **Spiderman** tends to find ordinary crooks instead of super baddies. I know that newspaper editors just hate it when anything interesting happens in a comic strip, but I wonder what would happen if they slipped, say, the Lizard into the strip, and blew the minds of all the people out there in televisionland.

The Lone Ranger is another strip which I enjoy mildly. Carry Bates does a better job with this strip than he does with **Buck Rogers**, and the art by Russ Heath helps. Even the coloring is good, a rare thing in a comic strip these days.

Carry Bates seems more at home in the old west than in outer space. His science mistakes irk me. Perhaps an expert on western lore would be similarly irked by the **Lone Ranger**, but I do not have any problems with it.

The Amazing Spider-Man
THIS CREEP MEANS TROUBLE!
I SAY WE TOTAL HIM NOW!
HEY! DON'T I GET A VOTE?
STAN & FRED LEE & KIDA 5-25
SLOWLY, SLYLY, EDGES TOWARDS THE OPEN WINDOW
THEN, BEFORE THE STARTLED GUNMAN CAN REACT...
I HATE TO BREAK UP THE PARTY, BUT--
LOOK! HE'S SAVIN' US A BULLET!

THE PHANTOM by Falk & Barry
AS THE WEARY SLAVE CARAVAN TRUDGES TOWARDS BARONKHAN, LED BY SLAVE MASTER ALI (THE PHANTOM)...
I'M HERE TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY OF REX...
..BUT I CAN'T LET THESE PEOPLE BE SOLD INTO SLAVERY.
HALT!

Bates does not, however, have that air of authority that Stan Lynde or Warren Tufts brings to a western strip.

Lee Falk is perhaps the only non-artist to have made a name for himself in comic strips. he has two strips, **Mandrake** and the **Phantom**, which have run essentially unchanged for almost fifty years. Neither is a classic. Whether Lee Falk still writes them i do not know. Certainly they read just like they always have. One of their strong points is continuity. Characters, settings, and villians are consistant from decade to decade. (One major exception: in the first year of his strip, **Mandrake** could do real magic!)

I do not know why, but the **Phantom** always has been and still is more popular than **Mandrake**. In recent years, the **Phantom** has had something of a revival, being picked up by such major papers as the Houston Post, while **Mandrake** has drifted into obscurity. (The Reading (PA) Eagle still carries it.)

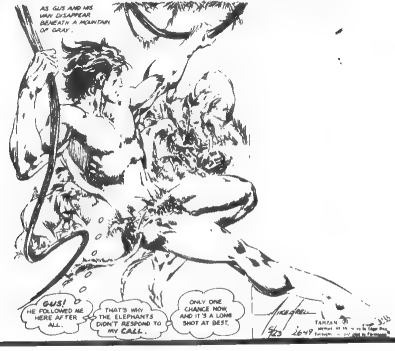
The Phantom and Diana are married, now, and have cute twin babies, who probably help the popularity of the strip.

Art on **Mandrake** is by Fred Fredericks, on **Phantom** by Sy Barry.

Both strips could serve as an example to some of the newer artists and writers on how to turn out a professional product.

It is a remarkable fact that currently there are more strips in the science fiction category than in any other grouping except the soaps. This temporary condition is due entirely to the movie, **Star Wars**. It happened once before, in the fifties, after a very popular movie called Destination Moon. Then, as now, the bad threatened to drive out the good. Then, the bad won, and science fiction all but vanished from the comic pages. I am afraid that history is all too likely to repeat itself.

I was an s-f fan long before I was a comic strip fan, so I'll save my comments on the science fiction strips as yet unmentioned until my next column.


AS GUS AND HIS MAN DISAPPEAR BENEATH A MOUNTAIN OF GRAY...
GUS! HE FOLLOWED ME HERE AFTER ALL.
THAT'S WHY THE ELEPHANTS DIDN'T RESPOND TO MY CALL.
ONLY ONE CHANCE NOW, AND IT'S A LONG SHOT AT BEST.
TARZAN

SUPER-TEAM SPIRIT

by Murray R. Ward

SUPER-TEAMS OF THE 1960's
THE "OTHER" COMPANIES" SUPER-TEAMS

LATER, AFTER A PRELIMINARY BRIEFING AND EXAMINATION
BECAUSE OF YOUR PHYSICAL STAMINA, YOU'VE BEEN SELECTED TO USE THE "THUNDER BELT"...
IT WILL CHANGE YOUR BODY'S ATOMIC STRUCTURE, PUT IT ON!
IN FIVE MINUTES THE BELT WILL HAVE ATTUNED ITSELF TO YOUR METABOLISM THAN ONLY YOU WILL BE ABLE TO USE IT!
FIVE MINUTES LATER
ENOUGH TIME HAS ELAPSED! NOW - TURN THE DIAL ON YOUR BELT!
AS HE TURNS THE DIAL, THE VERY ATOMS OF THE SURROUNDING AIR ARE SENT BY THE CHARGE OF ENERGY RELEASED!
RACK!
IT WORKED! YOUR BODY IS NOW SEVERAL TIMES DENSER THAN NORMAL MATTER AND SO YOUR WEIGHT HAS INCREASED IN PROPORTION!
WE DON'T KNOW YET HOW POWERFUL YOU'VE BECOME SO HIT THIS TARGET WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT! THE IMPACT WILL REGISTER ON THE DIAL!
OKAY, HERE GOES! I'LL PROBABLY WIND UP BREAKING MY HAND! WHA !?
KRUMF!
1981 Tower Publications

This issue we conclude our look at the super-hero teams in comics of the 1960s. So far we have covered every team published by today's largest comics publishers, Marvel and DC. In the mid-1960s, however, comics experienced a super-hero "boom" in the wake of the success of the **BATMAN** TV show and the reluctant "camp" craze, much like the science-fiction boom in the mass media that followed the 1970s success of the movie **STAR WARS**. Comics companies which had never published super-hero stories before suddenly created costumed crusaders, others whose last super-hero had died at the end of the 1940s Golden Age of Comics brought their old characters back to life, and entirely new comics companies sprang up with their own coterie of colorful crimebusters. In as much as this series of articles is devoted only to **teams** of super-heroes, we shall omit those publishers, Charlton foremost among them, whose characters never joined forces as a formulated super-team and whose roster of characters included no common-origin super-teams. All of the following super-teams were extremely short-lived, none of them surviving into the 1970s and some only for a couple of stories; when the camp craze died, it took the non-Marvel and non-DC heroes with it. Here, then, are the last of the 1960s super-teams.

I. ORIGINS AND ORGANIZATION

The most successful of the "other" super-teams was one which, while its organization harkened in many ways back to the beginnings of comics, also broke the mold of super-team traditions. Tower Comics, a new company on the comic scene, actually anticipated the coming craze and published their first issues in the fall of 1965, some months before the **BATMAN** show first aired. It was **another** television-inspired fad that partly inspired the Tower super-heroes, however: the secret agent fandom that had sprung up around the "**James Bond**"-films and novels and the **MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.** TV series. Suave and dashing heroes, forever romancing and saving the world from mad geniuses with their endless array of gimmicky weapons and devices, and for the most part (excepting their progenitor, Bond) belonging to secret organizations with acronymous names, were everywhere in the mid-1960s. As numerous as the "straight" super-spies were the comedy spoofs of same, including the "**Matt Helm**" and "**Our Man Flint**" movie series and even comics' Archie and his pals in an agency called P.O.P. Tower Comics chose to amalgamate and secret agent and super-hero themes in a single series, and created the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents.

THUNDER AGENTS #1 and its succeeding issues recalled the days of the Golden Age comic with their anthology format. Each issue was 25¢ (a giant comic the size of other companies' annuals in those pre-inflation days) and featured several stories, spotlighting the individual super-heroes and the group as a whole. The Thunder Agents were not a super-team in the usual sense; they were a team because they belonged to the same organization, THUNDER (which stood for The Higher United Nations Defense Enforcement Reserves) and because they shared the same comic, less than because of any decision of the individual characters' parts to band together as a group.

Still, the Thunder Agents were both a common-origin and a formulated super-team. Each character had his own feature strip, and two eventually spun off into their own books, so each was a soloist in his own right, but all owed their powers to the scientific devices created in its labs — a first among super-teams, as all of the characters had super-powers, but none had "natural" in-born powers (the exact opposite of DC's Legion of Super-Heroes, whose members are **required** to have powers independent of technology of "gadgets"). In fact, the initial trio of super-agents received their power talismans from a common creator, the late Prof. Jennings. The first issue of **THUNDER AGENTS** told how the good professor was killed in a raid by minions of the mysterious Warlord on a Thunder base, and several devices of his invention were found in the debris.

The Thunderbelt, the look of which series creator Wally Wood loved so much that he would devise versions of it for several of the later characters he drew (most conspicuously the Star-Spangled Kid in **ALL-STAR**), increased the molecular density of agent Leonard Brown (named for the strip's writer) and thus gave him super-strength and limited invulnerability akin to that of Marvel's later Luke Cage, Power Man. Brown became Dynamo, whose inherent weakness — every Tower character would have one — was the 30-minute time-limit on his use of the belt, coupled with the fact that Brown's intellect didn't always match his strength and stamina. Recurring plot elements in Dynamo's stories included his romance with secretary Alice Robbins; his verbal sparring matches with his immediate superior, the Chief (reminiscent of those between Jimmy Olsen and Perry White in the "**Superman**" strip); and his love/hate relationship with gorgeous armor-clad "friendly enemy," the Iron Maiden.

If Dynamo seemed based in part on schticks from several other comics series, the second Thunder stalwart was almost overwhelming in his originality. The second Jennings invention, an invisibility cloak, was given into this agent's keeping, but it was not his main weapon. Aged and infirm Dr. Dunn, a colleague of the late Prof. Jennings, volunteered to give up his humanity and donate his brain patterns to animate an android body, one of several to which he could switch his intellect at will, thus becoming virtually immortal and unkillable. With bald head and blank eyes, NoMan, the second Thunder agent, was a dead ringer for Marvel's Vision, but predated him by three years! NoMan's weakness was another time-limit, this one on the invisibility cape, plus the fact that only one android body could wear the cape at a time: if one "NoMan" was killed, a second had to go back after the cape. NoMan usually got "destroyed" several times in each story at a million dollars a crack for a

new body (again, this was before inflation; in the 1970s it would cost six times that amount merely to **rebuild** astronaut Steve Austin with bionic parts), and in later issues, a recurrent motif had the android agent entertaining wistful second thoughts about his non-human status.

Attired in a costume much like that of DC's Atom (whose artist, Gil Kane, he shared in his origin story), Menthor was the third original Thunder Agent. Besides gaining never-completely-catalogued mental powers from Jennings' last creation, a powerful cybernetic helmet, John Januss was also rehabilitated by the headpiece, having been a secret "mole" planted in the ranks by the Warlord, until continued use of the Menthor helmet turned him permanently into one of the "good guys". Unfortunately for the character, a recurring theme in his stories seemed to be lack of continuity, as the Tower writers and artists could never quite recall where they had left Menthor in the previous issue. The helmet was stolen repeatedly by villains, as were Dynamo's belt and NoMan's cape, once the recurring evildoers learned the secret of the super-agents' abilities, but the overuse of this plot seemed particularly unusual in Menthor's case in as much as the removal of his power-source also unmasked him, a fate most DC and Marvel heroes would almost die to prevent. The Tower heroes, however, like the Fantastic Four before them, took no pains to keep their civilian identities under wraps: Dynamo wore no mask and NoMan only disguised his android features when operating undercover, so the disclosure of Menthor's alter ego was par for the course. In the super-agents' seventh outing, Menthor was immortalized in the ranks of costumed champions when he became one of the first super-heroes to be killed in action!

The organization also boasted hundreds of ordinary human operatives in addition to the super-agents, of course, and foremost among these were a Blackhawk Challengers-like group that formed a team-within-the team of the Thunder Agents. The Thunder Squad (also rendered Thundersquad) included leader Guy Gilbert, demolitions man and strongman Dynamite, technology expert Kitten, locksmith and escape artist Weed, and strategist Egghead. Perhaps realizing that, as in the case of Ace and Proof in the Challengers of the Unknown at DC, giving the group both a leader and a genious member resulted in a team with two leaders, the Tower creative staff had Egghead precede Menthor in death in the 2nd issue. (Strangely enough, while Menthor got the standard rainsoaked hillside funeral service that is a tradition amongst comics characters who buy the farm, Egghead's demise was passed off as the fortunes of war, without so much as a eulogy to mark his passing.) The remainder of the Thunder Squad were soon relegated to supporting roles in the stories of the more popular super-hero characters, after one of their number became the fourth super-agent in THUNDER AGENTS #4 Kitten took turns playing female lead in the Dynamo and NoMan tales,and was also the love interest of the later recurring hero/villain, Andor, a human raised in seclusion by the Warlord's race and given "natural" powers to match the Thunder Agents. Dynamite even became Dynamo's understudy at one point. And Weed was given his own solo strip when Dynamo branched out into his own comic.

Guy Gilbert, the leader of the Thunder Squad, was a different story. The first operative to gain his powers from a device **not** invented by Prof. Jennings, he donned a special costume which gave him super-speed and became Lightning. Unlike the original agents, Lightning had no time-limit on his powers, which were closer in scope to those of Marvel's Quicksilver than of DC's Flash, but the continued use of the speed-suit did begin to tell

EACH MEMBER OF THE SQUAD IS A WELL-TRAINED, HIGHLY SKILLED SPECIALIST...
--LEADER OF THE SQUAD
DYNAMITE-- WEAPONS MAN
KITTEN-- TECHNICAL DEVICE EXPERT
"WEED"-- LOCK-SMITH-- CAN GET INTO ANYPLACE
"EGGHEAD"-- SUPER-BRILLIANT STRATEGIST
©1981 Tower Publications

on his health after a few adventures, and he had been warned from the start that the speed-inducer device built into the uniform might drastically reduce his lifespan. At Tower nobody ever got super-powers without a heavy price! Not one to play favorites, Kitten turned up as occasional girlfriend in Lightning's strip, as well.

Raven (no relation to the present DC heroine) was the fifth Thunder Agent, and served as Menthor's replacement after his death. In every way, he resembled his predecessor: both wore dark blue-black uniforms, both had shady pasts before reforming to help THUNDER, and both suffered from lack of continuity in their appearances. After an origin that gifted him with a winged costume that gave its wearer the power of flight and established his identity as Craig Lawson, a gymnast and skydiver whose eyes were ultra-sensitive to light, none of these attributes was ever again mentioned in a Raven story. Raven seldom took part in a Thunder Agents team story, but when he did, it was the only time (save for a single solo story by Gil Kane) that his costume even faintly resembled his initial outfit. In all his other stories, his past, his real name, and his light-sensitivity were forgotten, and his costume was totally redesigned to feature a pair of huge hemispherical "wings" which doubled as a cocoon-protection against bullets and blasters.

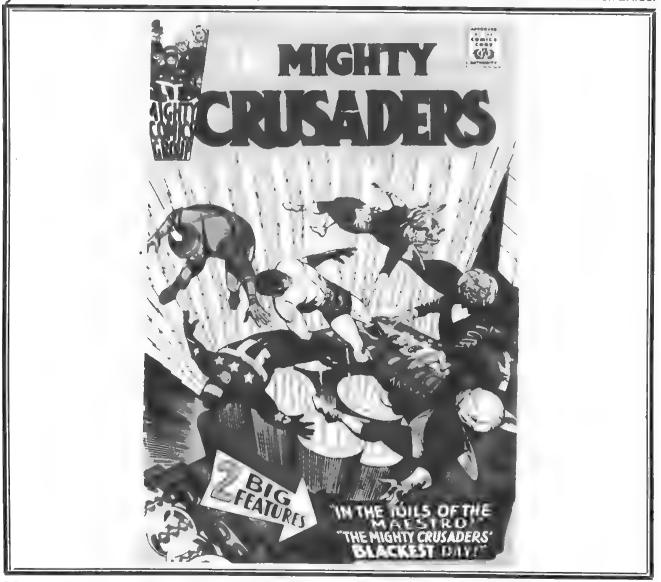
The raison d'etre of THUNDER and of its super-agents in the early issues of the series was to battle the schemes of an evil mastermind known as the Warlord, already mentioned several times in this article. As early as issue #2, the Warlord was revealed as one of a race of green-skinned subterraneans, and only one of an entire Council of Warlords, under the control of the Overlord. Eventually, perhaps spurred on by their vow to avenge the death of Menthor, the Thunder Agents wiped out the Warlord menace, only to see a new ever-returning antagonist take its place: S.P.I.D.E.R., another acronym-named secret society which served as THUNDER's opposite number for the duration of the series.

After 20 issues of **THUNDER AGENTS**, 4 issues of **DYNAMO**, and 2 issues of **NOMAN**, Tower Comics folded and took their super-heroes (including the non-teased characters of the companion magazine, **UNDERSEA AGENT**) with them. The Thunder Agents are unique among the "other" super-teams, however, in that they are currently scheduled to stage a comeback, under the auspices of a new publisher. It is indeed an unfortunate coincidence that sees this happy revival taking place in the wake of the passing of the series' creator, Wally Wood.

Just as everyone got on the bandwagon to spoof the secret agent, so during the camp craze did the super-hero spoofs abound. And just as "**the Man from R.I.V.E.R.-D.A.L.E.**" did takeoffs on Bond and U.N.C.L.E. in the Archie comics, so also did Archie and the gang poke fun at the super-hero concept. Strangely, Archie chose to imitate the original Captain Marvel rather than Superman or Batman (the Shazam-sayer and his famous family were still in comics limbo during the 1960s, it should be remembered), and was transformed in a burst of concentration, rather than a blast of lightning, into Pureheart the Powerful, whenever his beloved Veronica was endangered. Soon, Betty Cooper was being changed into Superteen whenever Archie / Pureheart was endangered, Jughead was becoming Captain Hero by rubbing his magic beanie, and Reggie was turning into Evilheart and alternately playing the villain of the piece and contesting Pureheart for a piece of the Veronica-rescuing action. The characters even worked together on occasion as an unnamed super-team of sorts, against an array of campy villains who schemed to rule the world, or worse, to rob Mr. Lodge's millions. (Somehow, the team was never completed by giving Ronnie a super-identity, as well. Presumably, she was neither altruistic enough nor evil enough to make a good super-doer.)

At the same time, however, the people at Archie Comics were also prodicng their own "straight" superheroes. Archie Comics, or as they were then called in their indicia, Radio Comics, had been known in the 1940s as MLJ Comics, and had a ready backlog of supercharacters to resuscitate when the boom arrived. At the time, though their roster of active heroes was not a great one: the Jaguar had been retired, and only the Fly, created for the company by the Joe Simon/Jack Kirby team at the time of the first Silver Age revivals, was still being published.

With the boom in effect, however, all that changed rapidly. The Fly was revamped and became Fly Man, and his book abounded with guest-stars. His female counterpart, Fly Girl, had always been present, and the Black Hood had shown up a time or two to help out in earlier issues, but now they were everywhere, along with the Shield, and a new/old version of the Comet. Finally, all five decided to form their own team, the Mighty Crusaders, which enterprise was immediately given its own title. The super-hero arm of the Archie operation was rechristened "Mighty Comics Group" both in the new team's honor, and to take advantage of the similarity of names with the Marvel Comics Group, who were enjoying a fair share of publicity at that point and whose cover art and corner trademark Mighty Comics imitated blatantly. In the fourth issue of **MIGHTY CRUSADERS**, virtually every super-character ever published by MLJ turned up for a guest-shot in a tale appropriately titled "**Too Many Super-Heroes**". Besides the five team members, present were the Hangman and the Wizard, two former heroes who had been revived as villains, plus such stalwarts as the Fireball, Inferno, Firefly, the Web, the Fox, Blackjack, Bob Phantom, Zambini the Miracle Man, Kardak the Mystic Magician, Steel Sterling, Mr. Justice, Captain Flag, the aforementioned Jaguar, the Shield's kid partner Dusty, and the Wizard's young aide Roy the Super-Boy (renamed Roy the Mighty-Boy). Still later, Fly Man's comic became the showcase title **MIGHTY COMICS**, and alternated between the Crusaders members and the other revived MLJ heroes in solo strips. The Web, the Shield, the Black Hood, and Steel Sterling each got a shot at top billing on the cover while the series lasted, with the Hangman (now reformed), the Fox, and Mr. Justice in back-up slots. Unfortunately, the tryouts, which had begun in #40, ended with the book's cancellation at #50.



YOU WILL GET INSTRUCTIONS DESIGNED TO KEEP YOU FROM STEPPING ON THE TOES OF OTHER LAW-AGENCIES! I WILL BE YOUR LEADER HENCEFORTH . . THOUGH YOU'LL BE FREE TO ENGAGE IN PRIVATE MISSIONS!
BE IN THIS UNDERGROUND HEADQUARTERS
CHANGE IN THE NEW SHIELD, YOU SEE
HA,HA! I'VE BEEN GIVEN A NEW COSTUME WHICH AMONG OTHER INNOVATIONS, CAN LAUNCH A FOE-CONFUSING BARRAGE OF
COSTUME'S
BUT THERE ARE MORE CHANGES AHEAD FOR ALL OF YOU! IF THIS DISPLEASES YOU, LEAVE!
BUT...
AH...ALL OF YOU REMAINED! GOOD! I PROMISE YOU THAT HENCEFORTH, THE CRUSADERS WILL BE BETTER THAN EVER!
GREAT! BUT NOBODY CAN TELL ME WHAT HAIRDO TO USE!
EVEN T.R.I.U.M.P.H. WOULDN'T DARE GO THAT FAR!
DON'T MISS NEXT ISSUE'S BONANZA OF FAB SURPRISES AND STARTLING DEVELOPMENTS GALORE! CRAZY!

A word about the individual Mighty Crusaders is in order. Just as Spider-Man possessed the proportionate abilities of a spider, so Fly Man had the powers of a fly, including flight courtesy of Wasp-like wings on his back. He gained these through use of a Fly Ring, which enabled him to change, Captain Marvel-like, to his alter ego. (Originally, the Fly's other self was an orphan child, Tommy Troy, who duplicated Billy Batson's feat of becoming an instant adult in his super-hero identity, but after a few issues early in the series this was changed and the Fly aged overnight to become Thomas Troy, attorney.) The Fly, or Fly Man as he became known later, would suffer from fluctuating powers in his Crusaders phase, with the scripters unable to decide whether he possessed the power to grow a la Giant-Man or not, and whether his abilities lasted for one hour or twenty-four. Fly Girl had identical powers and costume to Fly Man's, and was secretly movie actress Kim Brand; unlike Ant-Man and the Wasp or Hawkman and Hawkgirl, whom they resembled, their romantic attachment for each other never went past friendship and flirtation, thus leaving both characters open to possible relationships with others.

The Black Hood retained his Golden Age alter ego of policeman Kip Burland, with a story explaining his long absence from the super-hero scene, but the other two Crusaders members had more complicated revivals. The Shield was neither the original hero of that name, nor the short-lived protagonist of **THE DOUBLE LIFE OF PRIVATE STRONG**, an attempt to revive the Shield as a companion magazine to the Fly series by Simon and Kirby in 1959. Instead, this new Shield was the son of the original (whether his real name was Bill Higgins or Joe Higgins the writers couldn't make up their minds), and it was revealed that the first Shield had been transformed into a metal statue by a villain called the Eraser, a cure for which affliction his son was constantly seeking. The Comet claimed to be the former ruler of the planet Altrox, who, as he put it, "used to aid Earthlings years ago". Anyone who remembered the Comet from the 1940s, however, might have had trouble believing this story, since the Comet was killed in action in **PEP COMICS #17** and his brother became the Hangman to succeed him. Any hope that this might be a different hero with the same name was dashed when the Comet was shown in his secret identity as John Dickering, the same alter ego as the supposedly-deceased Golden Age character.

Nonsensical as some of their stories were (as opposed to the comparatively straight early Fly and Jaguar adventures), the Mighty Crusaders were fun while they lasted — which was a total of seven issues. MIGHTY CRUSADERS #7 led off with a Steel Sterling strip obviously intended for MIGHTY COMICS, then the Shield and the Black Hood only appeared in a supposed Crusaders story, and the book closed with a retelling of Fly Girl's origin. Better and greater things were promised for the next issue, but such never appeared, and the Mighty logo vanished from the stands as the Archie group went back to publishing only Archie-related titles.

Yet another pre-existant comics group went into the superhero business when Harvey Comics, then famed as the publishers of CASPER THE FRIENDLY GHOST (and today, of RICHIE RICH), threw their hat in the ring. Their super-hero ventures were both strange and sporadic, as they chose to imitate some of Marvel's most unwieldy titles (like TALES OF SUSPENSE and TALES TO ASTONISH, which Marvel itself was to drop as soon as the featured characters proved they could stand on their own) with books like DOUBLE-DARE ADVENTURES, UNEARTHLY SPECTACULARS, and THRILL-O-RAMA. None lasted more than two or three issues, but one did produce a pair of features that could be constituted as super-teams — sort of.

"Tiger Boy and Company" was a super-team in the same sense that Robby Reed of HOUSE OF MYSTERY'S original "Dial H for Hero" strip was a super-team - Tiger Boy was a one-man super-team, a single character capable of taking on a variety of super-identities. Paul Canfield was revealed in UNEARTHLY SPECTACULARS #1 as a child prodigy who could do virtually anything he attempted better than any of his peers. As he grew older, he discovered that his powers were virtually limitless; anything he thought of, he could make happen. At this point, holding the rest of humanity in utter contempt, he decided to take over the world! His parents, who had obviously never instilled in him the idealistic impulses that Ma and Pa Kent had taught the young Superboy, were forced to take action to stop him, and thus revealed both themselves and their son as inhuman beings from the planet Jupiter, disguised as Earth humans. Since his parents could cancel his powers at will, young Paul had little choice but to shape up. To say the least, this was a strange beginning for a champion of justice! It was just as well that Canfield's powers were in a league with those of the Spectre; he could never have gotten along with more conventional super-doers on a regular basis in a team setting.

UNEARTHLY SPECTACULARS #2 had Paul, still contemptuous of John Q. Public (our "hero" was billed as "The Boy Who Hates Us All" in this second story), acting to foil a robbery by assuming first his favorite alternate form as Tiger Boy (a tiger with a boy's face who made even Beast Boy/Changeling look cute by comparison), as well as those of the robotic Steel Man and the malleable Rubberman. "Whoever you are . . . am I ever glad you're on our side", opined a policeman. "Tiger Boy and Company is not on any side", warned the transformed Paul. "Not until people on Earth have learned to stop injustice!" (And maybe not even then, eh, Paul?)

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

READ MARVEL COMICS
AND STAND OUT IN A CROWD

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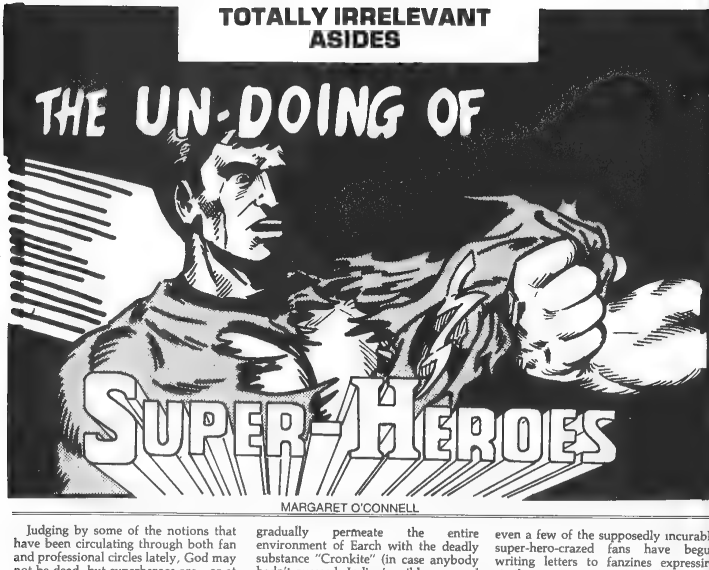
TOTALLY IRRELEVANT ASIDES



MARGARET O'CONNELL

Judging by some of the notions that have been circulating through both fan and professional circles lately, God may not be dead, but superheroes are—or at least, increasing numbers of people seem to think that they should be. This idea is nothing new, of course. Steve Skeates' 1979 article *"The Death of the Superheroes"* in *THE COMICS JOURNAL #47* proclaimed that not only the superhero genre, but the comic-book medium in general were already dead—they just didn't have enough sense to lie down and act like it. Before that, Robert Mayer's 1977 novel *SUPERFOLKS* began by killing off or otherwise eliminating all of the Golden Age-originated household-word super-heroes in various over-ingenious ways, leaving only Indigo, Mayer's thinly-disguised version of Superman, still alive and conceivably capable of combatting the various evils menacing the world, especially New York City. And Indigo himself was in the final stages of completely losing his powers, due to an evil mastermind's successful scheme to gradually permeate the entire environment of Earch with the deadly substance "Cronkite" (in case anybody hadn't guessed, Indigo's mild-mannered reporter secret identity was David Brinkley).

Apocalyptic as they may have been in their intentions toward Kryptonians and other super-powered things, the above two instances were comparatively isolated phenomena of their time, separated even from each other by several years. The current brand of anti-super-hero sentiment—which could more accurately be described as an increasingly all-pervasive weariness of super-heroes, relieved chiefly by a disproportionately strong interest in imaging how they could be permanently removed from the scene—seems to be more widespread. More and more comics professionals seem to be complaining more and more loudly in interviews and elsewhere about the limitations of the highly-stylized super-hero format and the near-total absence of four-color alternatives to it. REcently, even a few of the supposedly incurably super-hero-crazed fans have begun writing letters to fanzines expressing similar sentiments. (Whether these people—not to mention fandom at large—will endorse Roy Thomas' attempt to revitalize one of those much-lamented nearly-extinct alternative genres by buying *CAPTAIN CARROT AND HIS ZOO CREW*—which so far seems to be merely a disappointing hybrid, composed of unfortunately un-funny funny animals masquerading as rather un-heroic superheroes—is another matter entirely.)

This generalized discontent with the whole idea of super-hereos, super-heroes, and more super-heroes, is occasionally focused on a more specific target. The last few years' epidemic of super-hero deaths (a trend which seems to have been slowing down somewhat recently, though the upcoming much-publicized death of Captain Mar-Vell and the threatened "death of a Defender" [ho-hum] may signal a reversal of this) and power-strippings,

seems to indicate that super-heroes in general have reached such a saturation point that both fans and professionals have become willing to take a rather ruthless attitude about the need to thin the herd by eliminating its less viable (and less popular) members.

> [1]The final fate of Giant-Man as revealed in *MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE #85* (March, 1982) is only the most obvious recent example of this. According to *X-MEN #154* (Feb. 1982), p.6, Mr. Marvel is now just plain old Carol Danvers again, thanks to the incomprehensible and ineptly-explained effects of Parasite-like super-villainess Rogue's theft of her powers in *AVENGERS ANNUAL #10* (Summer, 1981). And let's not forget the White Tiger, whose magic-amulet-induced powers became so hazardous to his health—and resulted in such savage reprisals against his family when his secret identity was exposed—that he finally renounced superherodom forever in a 1981 issue of *PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN*.

The growing frequency of flimsily-motivated "good guy goes bad—forever" story-lines, in which super-heroes are permanently converted into villains (a la Phoenix [who ended up dying into the bargain] and, currently, Hank [Yellowjacket] Pym), appears to imply something even more alarming (if one has any sort of sentimental attachment to either super-heroes or conventional humanitarian morality): that comics creators and their readers have become so blase about the concept of super-powered beings that merely having them fight for truth, justice, and so on no longer produces the desired thrill. It takes super-powered atrocities, offenses against the traditional heroes' honor code ("I must not take a life—or else I am no better than Bugface the Belligerent, that cruel and callous villain!"), and/or spectacular super-hero deaths—preferably all three—to make many of today's comics readers, writers, and editors sit up and take notice.

Even the appeal of the most popular and often-imitated traditional heroes has begun to pall for some. Fan favorite artist/writer John Byrne has stated in public that he has completely lost interest in no less a big-name pillar of the super-heroc community than Batman, whom Byrne asserted has long since outlived his reason for existence—at least according to the rationale provided by his origin story. (As it happens, I

agree with this assessment—but then, I'm not sure that Batman should ever have existed in the first place. Ditto for Wonder Woman. For more details on these maddeningly cryptic and unorthodox opinions, stay tuned for future columns. Same bat-time, same bat-publication.) This remark in turn inspired fan commentator Murray Ward, in a column published in *LOC #2*, to speculate about what might constitute the ultimate *"Superman"* story (*i.e.*, the one that would effectively end the Man of Steel's super-heroic career forever, whether happily or horribly) and invite others to submit their own ideas about what it would take to finish off the hero of their choice as a crimefighter forever.

This brings us to *FANTASTIC FOUR #236* (nov. 1981) and *FLASH #300* (Aug. 1981): both major anniversary issues, both hailed as above-average issues of their respective titles (deservedly, in at least one case), and both examples of the undoing of a super-hero mythos. That this undoing ultimately proves to be illusory, the result of a villain's conspiracy to undo the hero or heroes in fact by convincing them of the fiction that in the first place (in their heroic identities) they never existed, does not alter the fact that the basic premise for each story is essentially, *"What would things be like if the Flash/the F.F. had never come into being?"* The inherent fascination of this question derives largely from the fact that, in regard to these stories, at least[2], it could easily be rephrased as, *"What would have happened to such-and-such a super-hero if he had existed in the real world, rather than a four-color never-never-land where freak accidents with radioactivity and dangerous chemicals confer powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men, instead of third-degree burns and crippling injuries?"* In the Flash's case, Cary Bates' answer is that he would be a disfigured, paralyzed wreck, bedridden for years as a result of the harmful effects of a lightning bolt-precipitated bath in a combination of all the chemicals known to modern science. As depicted by John Byrne, the F.F.'s situation is not so simple.

> [2]There is no such suggestion of non-comic-book reality in the superficially somewhat similar *"What if There Was No Fantastic Four?"* back-up in *WHAT IF #31* (Feb. 1981), which actually postulates a "Fantastic Three vs. the Renegade Thing" scenario which takes place in a fairly standard variation on the super-being-infested Marvel universe we all know so well—though the actions of the Hulkishly-motivated Ben Grimm in the story do manage to rather implausibly short-circuit what on the "real" Marvel-Earth turned out to be the origins of Iron Man, Spider-Man, Thor, and the Hulk.

The *"Fantastic Four"* twentieth anniversary special, *"Terror in a Tiny Town,"* does not begin by showing us what would have happned if the F.F. had made their famous space flight in a reality where cosmic rays have less, merciful consequences (i.e., they would all have died of radiation sickness), but what Reed, Sue, Ben, and Johnny would have been doing if that spaceflight (and their subsequent transformation into super-heroes) had never taken place.

I HAVE TOLD YOU REPEATEDLY THAT YOU ARE TOLERATED HERE ONLY BECAUSE OF YOUR MARGINAL PROFICIENCY IN YOUR FIELD
I WILL NOT HAVE YOU TOYING WITH VALUABLE UNIVERSITY EQUIPMENT, IS THAT CLEAR?
YYES...
VERY WELL! YOU HAVE CLASSES THIS AFTERNOON. I SUGGEST YOU ATTEND TO THEM!
EXCELLENT! THE KNOWLEDGE THAT SO DELICIOUS A MECHANISM AS THE ACCELERATOR IS AVAILABLE BUT DENIED TO HIM WILL DRIVE RICHARDS INTO EVER GREATER DEPTHS OF DESPAIR AND CONFUSION
MY PLAN IS WORKING PERFECTLY!

(Actually, that isn't quite the case, either—if the F.F. had simply been supplied with a falsified alternate history in which the only crucial change was that they were never exposed to cosmic rays, Reed Richards would have been the star scientist-in-residence at "Liddleville College," rather than the bumbling butt of department chairman "Vincent Vaughn" [better known as Victor Von Doom], who forbids him to even go near that expensive new particle accelerator and makes sure that Reed will feel as inept as "Vaughn" says he is by artificially disrupting Richards' thought processes.)

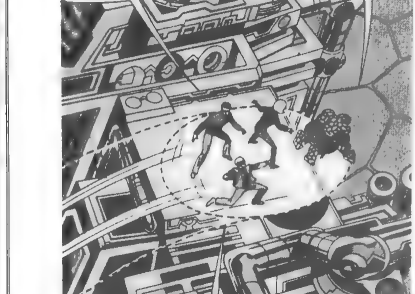
The way in which Byrne explores this situation is to exploit its considerable built-in potential for characterization, rather than merely relying on the superficial bizarreness of the F.F.'s incongruous circumstances to hold the reader's attention and interset throughout the story. The psychologically revealing form taken by each character's nagging half-memories of their hypnotically-repressed real past, and the way they interact together to decide on an appropriate course of action once they finally realize the truth, provide subtle, convincing insights into their respective attitudes and personalities in a truly masterful manner. This achievement is rendered even more impressive by the unpromising material Byrne has to work with—a cast of characters who were not particularly riveting as individuals even under Lee and Kirby, and have been consistently portrayed as two stereotypes (the Bad-Temepred but Good-Hearted Touzh guy and the Callow [usually *very* callow] Youth) and Mr. and Mrs. Fantastically Dull ever since. In this story I genuinely believed for the first time that Reed Richards is really as brilliant as Marvel has always said he is, because he was actually shown making deductions that are neither a) so obvious to anyone capable of so much as adding two and two that

HOW COULD YOU GUESS THAT ALL OF "LIDDLEVILLE" WAS BUT A CONSTRUCT, A SCALE MODEL BUILT BY "DR. DOOM" MASTER OF MYSTIFICATION!
AND YOU! YOU WERE VINCENT VAUGHN!
YOUR TRUE FORMS, LIB HELPLESS THEIR MINDS TRANSMITTED INTO THIS MINIATURE SYNTHE-CLONE I CREATED OF YOU
OF COURSE, IT OCCASIONALLY AMUSED ME TO ENTER A ROBOT FACSIMILE OF MYSELF—TO OBSERVE YOU FIRST HAND!

the rest of the F.F.'s failure to see them suggests that they are morons, not that Reed is a genius, or b) a lot of pseudo-scientific gibberish that sounds impressive only because it is such arrant nonsense that there is no way even the most intelligent reader can make head or tail of it.

The way Reed figures out the method behind *"Terror in a Tiny Town"*'s central gimmick—the Puppet Master's apparent success in literally transforming the F.F. into average American citizens (by stripping them of their powers, as well as providing them with a thoroughly ordinary environment and occupations)—is really quite ingenious. Since Reed, Sue, Johnny, and Ben's "very molecular structure was altered" by those all-important cosmic rays, and Reed himself has repeatedly failed in his attempts to reverse this molecular alteration in order to cure Ben of being the Thing, it is unlikely that the less scientifically-gifted Puppet Master could have succeeded in actually restoring the Fantastic Four's bodies to their pre-super-powered state. But this appears to be exactly what he has done. Reed reasons that the only way this effect could have been achieved would be for the F.F.'s consciousnesses to have been transferred into artificial, non-super-powered bodies. The villain's passing reference to "synthe-clones" during the heroes' subsequent confrontation with Doctor Doom enables Reed to further deduce that the artificial bodies they now inhabit must have been cloned from their real ones, and thus must have the genetic potential to acquire the same super-powers as their original forms if subjected to the proper dosage of cosmic rays—a treatment Reed promptly proceeds to arrange

Reed's obsessive caution and secretiveness about his work are also highlighted in this story by several incidents which demonstrate that these qualities are more than the annoying and apparently arbitrarily-assigned tics they have often seemed in the past. As the Fantastic Four soar over the imprisoning walls of the miniature town of Liddleville on an invisible "flying carpet" provided by Sue, Reed fusses overprotectively over the others, barraging them with an endless stream of warnings about everything: "Be careful, Sue—in fact, all of you. Do not become too accustomed to the power levels in these bodies. [Reed had given the entire team an extra-large dose of cosmic rays in order to boost their usual powers to twenty times normal strength to compensate for the antlike tininess of their synthe-clone bodies]... Don't move around too much. We can't see the edges of this [invisible flying] column. Don't risk falling off."


DON'T MOVE AROUND TOO MUCH. WE CAN'T SEE THE EDGES OF THIS COLUMN. DON'T RISK FALLING OFF
ALL I'M RISKIN' IS MY LUNCH. DO WE HAVE TO GO SO BLAMED FAST?
AW, DON'T BE SUCH A WET BLANKET, THING! THIS IS COOL! I FEEL LIKE THE SILVER SURFER!

The almost comical efect of this worried clucking is reinforced by the equally telling characterizations of other members of the F.F. in the same scene. Ben, apparently oblivious of the danger of "hanging out the window" of such a skimpy form of transportation, crouches at the edge of the invisible platform, peering intently over the side as he irreverently responds to Reed's warning: "All I'm riskin' is my lunch. Do we have to go so blamed fast?' To which the devil-may-care Johnny Storm replies, "Aw, don't be such a wet blanket, Thing! This is cool! I feel like the Silver Surfer!", and strikes a pose to prove it

The contrast between the exaggeratedly over-cautious Reed and his teammates is further heightened by a scene a few pages later which reminds us of how Richards' apparently irrational obsession with avoiding even the most trivial risk may serve a useful and even vital function for someone in a leadership position in such a perilous line of work. Reed, who has been gradually feeding the others an elaborate series of cryptic instructions, finally reveals in response to a question from Johnny that "Doom—or rather the complex circuitry in his armor—is necessary to my plan" The Torch's thought-balloon reaction is rather enlightening: "An' you still don't want to tell us what the plan is, just on the off chance Doom is monitoring us. Boy, sometimes Reed's secrecy can be a major pain!"

Major pain or not, Reed's incessant worrying over details is amply justified where Doctor Doom is concerned, as the final pages of the story reveal. As a result of the massive electric shock he received when his armor triggered the make-shift device constructed by Reed to transfer the F.F.'s minds back into their original bodies, Doom's armor freezes in position and Doom himself apparently goes into a coma, a handy development which prompts the Torch to indulge in jokes about using the frozen-in-place super-villain as a hatrack and the Thing to casually hoist the statuelike Doom to his shoulder, responding to Reed's agitation over his

OH--SUSAN, HELP ME! BEN AND I WERE UP HALF THE NIGHT. HE SAYS IF ALL THIS IS A SHAM CREATED BY MY STEP-FATHER THAT HE AND I ARE NOT REALLY MARRIED
HE WAS SO ANGRY! HE SAID HE'D KILL MY STEP-FATHER. SAID HE'D TAKEN ALL BEN'S DREAMS AND TURNED THEM INTO SOME-THING DIRTY.
AND NOW... HE'S GONE!
DON'T WORRY ALICIA. BEN WON'T DO ANYTHING RASH -- WE'LL FIND HIM

excessive nonchalance with an impatient, "Aw, gimme a break, Stretch! Either he's all froze up or he ain't. Which is it?" Although Reed's solemn warning that "We cannot risk underestimating Doom for a moment. He is the most dangerous man who ever lived, and we dare not allow ourselves to relax just because we have [won] an apparent victory" makes little impression on his jubilation taem-mates, the readers sees that, far from being in a coma, Doom is in fact watching the Fantastic Four from the unexpected vantage point of "Liddleville" at that very moment, gloating, "Richards is too stupid to realize that using my armor to trigger his crude transferral system...served also to transmit my mindinto the robotic body of Vincent Vaughn.' Now I have but to wait until they are off-guard...and a simple twist of this ring will restore me to my true body."

Fortunately for the unsuspecting (except for Reed) F.F., this sneaky scheme is nipped in the bud by the Puppet Master, who smashes Doom's mind-transferral ring in a vengeful fury over his former co-conspirator's perversion of the Puppet Master's dream of giving his blind step-daughter Alicia a normal life with the man she loves by putting Alicia, the Thing, and all their closest friends into artificial bodies, (thus restoring Alicia's sight and Ben's original non-orange-rockpile appearance). Enraged by Doom's callously altering the Liddleville scenario to achieve the F.F.'s humiliation instead of Alicia's happiness, the Puppet Master sics all the other mechanical inhabitants of the miniature town on the Latverian despot, who is now apparently trapped forever, by the loss of the ring in the robot body of Vincent Vaughn. Exit Doom, pursued by a mob of homicidal metal housewives, farmers, and construction workers.

The Puppet Master is not the only person whose dreams of life as he would most like it to be are at stake in this story. At least half of the F.F. shares Philip Masters' idealized vision of an idyllically ordinary existence untroubled by super-powers or super-villains. Unsurprisingly enough, the Thing is one of them.

As one of the principal beneficiaries of the Liddleville illusion, Ben reacts violently when that illusion is shattered, repeatedly threatening to beat the well-meaning but unscrupulous Masters to a pulp—especially after he realizes that, as Alicia tearfully reports to Sue later, "...if all this is a sham created by my step-father, [then Ben] and I are not really married!" (p. 22). Despite the discovery that he has been tricked into involuntarily defiling his own most cherished dream by living in sin with the woman he has worshipped on a pedestal for so many years, once he gets over the initial shock, Ben decides to defy both common sense and his own traditional-minded scruples in order to remain in the toy town and continue living with Alicia. As he explains to the astonished Reed, "I ain't going back[to the outside world]...I got nothin' to go back to. This may all be fake, but at least me an' Alicia have some kinda life here. Maybe it's all a lie—but it's better than the truth we been livin'" (p. 23).

Of course, this being Marvel comics, Ben thinks better of this desperate decision and returns to the fold at the last minute, just in time to be turned back into the Thing. But it's more than obvious that he prefers the Puppet Master's version of reality to the hand he has actually been dealt by the Marvel universe.

Sue Storm Richards' feelings about the matter are not quite as conspicuous. However, the nightmarish quality of the jumbled memories of her real life with the Fantastic Four that come to Sue in dreams at the beginning of the story suggests that, as one might expect from the way she has been portrayed virtually since the F.F.'s origin, the so-called Invisible Girl regards super-heroics as an onerous duty at best, and would much prefer a Liddleville-like existence in which she and her loved ones could just settle down to a normal humdrum family life. To Sue, asleep and dreaming, super-powers are nothing but a curse that causes the three most important men in her life to turn savagely on each other, struggling violently among themselves as has so often actually happened in the volatile group's notoriously soap-operatic history.

As usual, the one who loses his temper first and destructively lights into the others is the Thing, who starts smashing everything in sight, then attacks Reed for having insisted on the hastily-organized surreptitious space flight which resulted in Ben's cosmic ray-induced metamorphosis into the monstrous Thing. As the flexible-bodied Mr. Fantastic writhes about like an oversized rubber band in a doomed effort to defend himself, Johnny joins the fray by smashing a chair over the Thing's rocky orange head while he, Johnny, is still in his ordinary flesh-and-blood form. In fact, in Sue's dream, an ordinary flesh-and-blood form seems to be the only one Johnny's got, since he doesn't change into the Human Torch until the murderously angry Ben heaves a handful of live coals at him, causing Johnny to literally go up in flames with an agonized scream of "Argh!" Predictably enough in a nightmare emanating from the subconscious of the original reluctant super-heroine, Sue herself also displays no sign of any super-powers, invisible or otherwise, at any point during the disturbing dream sequence, which ends with the all-too-human Torch still helplessly consumed in fiery agony (pp. 7-9).

The Thing's dream also has its

STEADY, BEN. I DON'T HAVE THE EQUIPMENT TO RUN A COMPLETE PHYSICAL ON YOU HERE.
LOUSY! HOW AM I SUPPOSED TA FEEL I'M THE THING AGIN, AIN'T I?
PERHAPS
BEN--MY DARLING--WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG?
GO AWAY, ALICIA! PLEASE! I DON'T WANT YOU TO SEE ME LIKE THIS!
AND I HAVE "SEEN" YOU WITH MY FINGERTIPS A THOUSAND TIMES. I DO NOT LOVE YOU BECAUSE OF MY BLINDNESS, MY DARLING. I LOVE YOU DESPITE IT.
OF COURSE, DEAREST BEN! AND I HAVE ALWAYS LOVED YOU!

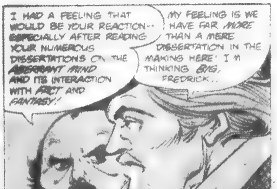
acknowledges right away (through the brainwashed protagonists' ominous dreams of their real past life) that things in Liddleville are not as they seem. This frees both Byrne and the reader to focus upon the more interesting issues of how the admittedly deceptive situation was created and how the F.F. will react to it, rather than forcing them to ignore whodunit, whydunit, and how the characters will be affected by the fact that they dunit, in order to boggle fruitlessly until the very end of the story over whether or not anything under handed was done at all.

However, if Bates wants to hang his entire story on this one rather uninteresting peg, there is nothing in the unwritten agreement between author and reader to prevent him from doing so. Unfortunately, "Mr. Surprise" is so determined to hooodwink us as thoroughly as the villainous Abra Kadabra seems to have hoodwinked the Flash that he stoops to the four-color equivalent of false advertising.

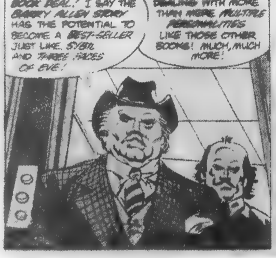
Showing us diabolically deceptive situations from the hero's point of view is one thing—after all, it is the hero that the villain is trying to fool—but inserting recurring conversations and comments from other characters which support and reinforce the illusion, even though they take place so far "offstage" in respect to the hero that he couldn't possibly overhear them or have any inkling that they have ever taken place, makes a mockery of the minimum standard of fair play the reader expects in exchange for his willing suspension of disbelief. No sensible villain would bother to stage all the elaborate scenes Bates includes if their ostensible target weren't available to get the benefit of them—yet this, it becomes clear at the end of the story, is exactly what Bates has had Abra Kadabra do again and again. True, Abra Kadabra is not exactly a sensible villain (he ultimately betrays himself by having the accomplices he has conjured up out of protoplasm applaud his criminal genius so loudly that the Flash overhears and realizes what must be going on), but the earlier "backstage" scenes he is presumably responsible for don't seem to be any more clearly designed to justify their existence by flattering his outsize ego than they are to further his plan of fooling the Flash, who is too far away to witness them. Thus, they serve no function at all within the fictional reality of the story, and are obviously included for the sole purpose of deluding the readers and setting them up for a "surprise" conclusion which they could have easily anticipated if not for all the carefully faked evidence the scripter has inserted to muddy the waters

As a result, the reader is left with an anniversary issue that recaps the Flash's entire past history without providing the

In this elaborately deceptive scene, which the play-acting villain's ostensible intended victim cannot possibly overhear, the scripter sets up a phony conflict between Barry Allen's supposed doctor and the psychiatrist Dr. Petrov, a big-name specialist interested in making big bucks by writing a bestseller about the Allen case.


I HAD A FEELING THAT WOULD BE YOUR REACTION-- ESPECIALLY AFTER READING YOUR NUMEROUS DISSERTATIONS ON THE ABERRANT MIND AND ITS INTERACTION WITH ART AND FANTASY!
MY FEELING IS WE HAVE FAR MORE THAN A MERE DISSERTATION IN THE MAKING HERE! I'M THINKING BIG, FREDRICK...

AVERAGE FLASH - I HATE TO SNOOP--WHAT WOULD PARENTS I PLANNED EVERY FACET EVERY DETAIL TO PERFECTION!
EVERY DETAIL EXCEPT ONE...ABRA THE ONE WHOSE APPEARANCE IN A CERTAIN RED FLASH WILL ENDANGER MY COVERUP... BUT NOTHING


...BIG AS IN AMAZING BOOK SALES! I SAY THE BARRY ALLEN STORY HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BECOME A BEST-SELLER JUST LIKE SYBIL AND THREE FACES OF EVE!
BUT WE'LL BE DEALING WITH MORE THAN MERE MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES LIKE THOSE OTHER BOOKS! MUCH, MUCH MORE!

EXCUSE ME, DR. PETROV, BUT MY OBJECTIVE IN SUMMONING YOU HERE WAS FIRST AND FOREMOST TO--
--CURE HIM! YES, YES, FREDRICK, I KNOW! AND WE WILL CURE HIM, HAVE NO DOUBT!
I ASSURE YOU MY REPUTATION OF EXPERTISE WITH THESE SPECIALTY CASES HAS BEEN QUITE WELL-EARNED!

slightest insight into what makes the central character—or anyone else in the story—tick, and which offers nothing more to make up for this lack than a gimmicky final plot twist whose own inherently limited effectiveness has been undermined in advance by the scripter's indulgence in misdirection so elaborate and unjustifiable that it amounts to out and out fraud. Not exactly the ideal way to celebrate a milestone as significant as a 300th issue.

As illustrated above, both *FLASH #300* and *FANTASTIC FOUR #236* share two major themes: the (illusory) undoing of a super-hero mythos and the idea of dreams (or nightmares) coming true. "*Flash*"-scripter Cary Bates virtually ignores the fresh story possibilities generated by each of these relatively unhackneyed motifs in favor of constructing yet another plot-heavy puzzle of an all-too-familiar type. John Byrne, on the other hand, skillfully uses similar initial premises to demonstrate how looking at tired old characters through the wrong end of the telescope, whether by standing the basic super-hero situations on its head (by "undoing" the accumulated mythos, and even the origin), or by considering how the characters' own fantasies might change the content of our mass-produced four-color fantasies if they were given the chance, sheds new light on the subject and suggests that those characters may not be so old and tired after all.

That such "what if"-type themes can effectively provide the mainspring of the plot without necessarily obliging the scripter to strip the central characters of their super-heroic careers entirely is shown by J.M. DeMatteis and Mike Zeck's weird but gripping Captain America story "*The American Dreamers*" (*CA #264*, Dec. 1981). In this tale, the focus of the question "What if…?" is not Captain America himself, but the society around him—a society which shifts jerkily back and forth from an idyllic world where Cap is a retired super-hero doing elder-statesman ambassador duty for a still-living JFK now serving his sixth consecutive term as President, to a racist's paradise where all blacks, including Cap's old friend the Falcon, are kept firmly under the heel of whites, to a world of children who play all day and don't even know what a grownup is, to a fascist dictatorship where blacks, Jews, and mutants are paraded through the streets in chains to celebrate the anniversary of the Nazi conquest of the United States. Thus, the story has plenty of innovative angles to exploit even without resorting to the drastically "anti-super-heroic" measures of the "*Flash*" and "*F.F.*" tales, allowing Captain American to retain some semblance of his usual super-hero status in each of these unstable artificially-imposed realities. In fact, the final crisis of the issue comes when the fanatically nostalgic villain tries to defeat Cap by the simple expedient of having his team of captive telepaths project a vision of a world in which the star-spangled hero does not exist, only to discover, to his horror, that it is impossible to eliminate Captain America from reality without also eliminating America itself.

Perhaps, as some critics fear, it has also become impossible to eliminate super-heroes from comics—at least Marvel and DC comics—without eliminating the comic books' very reason for being. Thus, at least until alternative genres are revived or invented to take their place, the super-heroes who are uncreated in one issue will rise again in the next, discovering that their momenty non-existence was just an illusion or an imaginary story. Meanwhile, though, these "non-super-hero" super-hero stories, like other "what if" stories of the more mind-stretching kind, provide a potentially fascinating detour out of the standard rut.

DON'T GET THE WRONG IMPRESSION, FREDERICK! FIRST AND FOREMOST, MY MOTIVE FOR CHOOSING THE RIDICULOUS FIELD OF ASTIGMATISM MEDICINE WAS TO WAGE WAR IF YOU WILL, AGAINST MENTAL IMBALANCES.
NO ONE WANTS TO SEE A TOTAL [illegible] AND FOUR EYES IS MORE THAN I
AND BESIDES, A CURE IS MANDATORY IF WE'RE TO EXPECT A MAJOR PAPER-BACK SALE AND MOVIE TIE-IN FROM THE BOOK.
FOR A PSYCHIATRIC CASE-STUDY TO GO THROUGH THE ROOF IN TODAY'S BOOK MARKET AN UPBEAT ENDING IS AN ABSOLUTE MUST!
MOMENTS LATER, IN THE SOFT SHADOWS OF A DIMLY-LIT PRIVATE ROOM NESTLED IN A CORNER OF THE SOUTH WING...
BARRY... BARRY, ARE YOU AWAKE? IT'S ME, FREDERICK!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, FREDERICK. I WASN'T ASLEEP IN ART JUST "THE CORPORATE"
MY MIND WAS RACING!
AWK! THE BRAINWASH!

End NOTES

This issue's column brings to an end (at least for the present) two of the discussions that have run through the column over the last six issues. One of these has been a structural analysis of several of the great Disney animated feature films, with emphasis on cyclical patterns in their story structures and on what Steve Englehart might term "the rising and advancing of the spirit" of their central characters. Another has been a look at how the cartoon medium, in comics or animation or whatever form it may take, can express not only optimistic wish-fulfillment fantasies, but also darkly pessimistic, "nightmare" visions. The latter range all the way from the surrealistic misadventures of Winsor McCay's dreamers (**CF #17**) to the realistic confrontations of doomed, ordinary soldiers with death in Harvey Kurtzman's war stories in EC's **TWO-FISTED TALES.** This installment deals with both themes in relation to two Disney films made roughly forty years apart, which in many ways are very much alike: **BAMBI** (1942) and **THE FOX AND THE HOUND** (1981).

BAMBI is constructed around the cyclical progression of the seasons. Two complete seasonal cycles are completed within the film, forming a single phase in a larger cyclical movement. The film begins in Spring-time with the birth of the fawn Bambi, and eventually moves through Summer and Autumn into Winter, which at first seems a time for play (in the scene of Bambi and his rabbit friend Thumper on the ice), but eventually emerges as a time of death. The skunk Flower sinks into immobility of hibernation, the deer are forced into constant travel to find food amidst the snow, and finally, Bambi's mother is killed by hunters. Here the film comes to the end of its first phase; it resumes after an unspecified amount of time in the characters' lives has passed.

The beginning of the second phase takes place in Spring, and not only is nature "reborn" as the seasonal cycle begins anew, but so are four of the principal characters, in a sense. Bambi, Thumper, Flower and the doe Faline have all become adults, looking and sounding different than they had before, especially in the case of Bambi, who has become much bigger, changed in coloring, and sprouted antlers. Since the film has not shown any intermediate stages in the growth of the animals between babyhood and adulthood, their metamorphoses appear as abrupt as that of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. The gap in time also underlines the fact that the death of Bambi's mother marks the culmination of a phase in his life, while the first portion of the next section of the film, in which he falls in love, marks the beginning of a new stage. The cyclical pattern of the story is further emphasized by the fact that Bambi and Faline react to each other in their first meeting in the second phase of the film in much the same way that they did in their meeting in the first phase (he with embarrassment, she with delight). Yet another indication of the cyclical progression is the fact that the first phase began with animals coming to tell the owl of Bambi's birth, and the second phase begins with Bambi himself coming to greet the owl.

The second phase does not extend into Winter, but it too ends with a time of death. The hunters, who act as unseen agents of death, and are this time preceded by their demoniacal hounds, return to the forest, but this time they do

not kill directly. Instead the real menace is the forest fire they accidentally create; this is a form of death that threatens not individual animals, but the forest's entire population, and, indeed, ends by consuming much of the forest itself. The fire ends the second phase of the film, and the third begins after an unspecified period of time passes in the lives of the characters.

The film ends with the beginning of the third phase, which re-enacts the beginning of the film. The owl is again awakened by other animals, and goes to see a newborn fawn. This time, however, there are two fawns, the offspring of Bambi and Faline. Moreover, while signs of the destruction wrought by the fire are still around, there are areas of greenery about as well; the forest is returning to life.

This finale shows that the cyclical movement is not a matter of mere repetition: each revolution enlarges upon the previous one. The twin fawns obviously are a "doubling" of Bambi's own birth. The fire is a more fearsome image of death than the bullet that claimed Bambi's mother. The first phase ended with the death of an individual; the second ends with the death of Bambi's world. In moving from the death of Bambi's mother to the fire, the film moves from an intimate scale to an epic one. (Something of the epic scale is even present in the former case, however; the falling snow amidst the blackness of night when Bambi's father, the Great Prince, tells him of his mother's death, is like nature weeping.)

Thumper and Flower also show up at the end with offspring. Thumper's several babies are clearly miniature versions of himself, all thumping their feet in his characteristic fashion. So there is "enlargement" upon the past in this case as well. It is important to see that Bambi is not alone in making his life's journey through the course of the film: Thumper's, Flower's, and even Faline's progresses parallel his own. They are all "children" in the first phase, they all have become adults and fall in love in the second, and they all have become parents in the third.

There is another "doubling" as well. The film's first scene, showing the newborn Bambi with is mother, ends with a long shot of his father, the Great Prince, surveying his forest domain from atop a high cliff. The first phase ends when, after Bambi's mother's demise, the Great Prince first speaks to Bambi, and leads him off. Father and son escape the fire together at the end of the second phase. The very last scene of the film moves from Faline and the two newborn fawns to a long shot of the cliff again, this time showing both the Great Prince and Bambi up there: there are now *two* Princes of the Forest. But the Great Prince then leaves Bambi alone atop the cliff, foreshadowing his eventual death, when Bambi will become Great Prince and rule the forest in his stead. The final shot of Bambi portrays him in silhouette as a double for his father. The resemblance was first noticeable in the pose Bambi struck earlier in the film upon defeating his rival for Faline.

From the very start of the film Bambi is called "the Young Prince," a name signifying that he always has the potential to become a Great Prince. The fawn Bambi lives in a feminine world, populated by his mother, the fawn Faline, and other does. In one scene Bambi the fawn encounters the adult male deer, who create an impression of power and mystery as they leap through the field; Bambi is intimidated by them, but joyfully imitates their leaping as well. The Great Prince seems to embody the other stags' qualities on a godlike level. He appears utterly unapproachable and alien to Bambi the fawn, but to Bambi the youthful adult he is a stern mentor. Hence as Bambi grows older, the state of mature adulthood represented by his father grows less strange to him, and Bambi moves further along the path from Young Princehood to Great Princehood.

Whereas Dumbo remains a baby and Pinocchio a child in their films, in the course of his film Bambi grows from utter infancy (we first meet him very soon after his birth) to adulthood and from complete dependency (on his mother) to a position of leadership. This progress is marked by a series of rites of passage. The first of these are relatively easy and indeed pleasant: learning to walk, learning to talk, and becoming a part of the general community (of deer). The film's second phase brings another enjoyable rite of passage, that of Bambi's falling in love, and the third phase brings yet another, that of becoming a father.

Other rites of passage, however, are far less pleasant. Right after his birth Bambi has his first encounter with fear, as he shrinks from the sight of the well-meaning but odd-looking, teasing owl. Bambi's first encounters with Faline also cause him some initial trepidation. But there are other causes for fear that are far more serious: the hardships of Bambi's first Winter, the death of his mother, the battle with his sinister rival for Faline, the attack of the hunters' murderous hounds, and the great forest fire. In each of these instances the nightmare element enters Bambi's life. When Faline first kisses the adult Bambi his environment becomes a fantasy world, full of pink sky and clouds, through which the two deer frolic. But then, with the battle between Bambi and the other male deer, the fantasy world becomes a nightmare world, in which the two rivals are depicted as black, shadowy, and powerful figures savagely waging war against a night-dark background. The film only shifts back into reality once Bambi has won.

Reaching maturity thus means suffering through a series of "real-life" nightmares. As a fawn, Bambi is assisted through them by his parents: his mother helps him endure the winter, and his father aids him after hert death, which nevertheless causes the fawn tremendous emotional pain. After Bambi becomes an adult, he faces his trials himself, and rather than merely suffer through them, he fights against the menace he confronts, and, indeed, triumphs over it: he defeats the rival stag and fights off the attacking dogs. Note too that while Bambi's sufferings as a child came to him against his will, he chooses to fight the stag and the dogs. He fights them in order to defend Faline; hence, through undergoing these trials Bambi demonstrates his sense of moral responsibility towards another, and also

both asserts and proves his love for that same individual. Bambi's childhood trials tested his inner strength; his adulthood trials test not only that, but also his moral courage and the depth of his capacity for love. As for the fire, it is an incarnation of death and "real life nightmare" that cannot be fought but can only be escaped, and then only narrowly. Although the horror of the fire may prevent one from recognizing the fact at first, Bambi again proves himself by being able to escape from the midst of the mortal dangers with which the forest fire surrounded him.

The way in which the world of the film shifted back into reality after the darkly expressionistic vision of Bambi's battle with the stag symbolizes the message of the film as a whole. Real-life nightmares occur but they eventually pass, and the world returns to normalcy. To survive the nightmare is to triumph, just as Bambi defeated the stag. Furthermore, to survive is to become a better and stronger individual: remember, Bambi first began to look like the Great Prince after winning that conflict. The reasons for *BAMBI*'s virtues and power as a child's fairy tale should now be apparent. It not only shows that, with courage, troubles—even the loss of a parent—can be survived, but that adults, who may seem as ominous and frighteningly powerful to a child as the Great Prince, need not be feared. After all, the child can see Bambi, Thumper, and flower all grow into adults while retaining the same personalities, and can even see Bambi become a double for the Great Prince himself.

The film's cyclical motif reinforces its message. A season of death and nightmare is inevitably followed by a season of joy and rebirth. There is not only continuity to life, but improvement, according to *BAMBI*, as indicated by the pair of fawns and pair of Great Princes at the end. Even the disturbing division between the world of the female deer and the world of the male deer in the early part of the film is in part resolved by its ending. Though the finale finds Bambi and Faline far apart in distance, their love for each other has by that time been clearly established, whereas Bambi's father had never betrayed a hint of affection for his mate. (Even on helping her and Bambi escape hunters earlier, he seemed entirely grim.)

Disney feature films have often been criticized for their "nightmare" elements, and yet it should be clear from this analysis that it is the relationship between the "bright" and "dark" aspects of *BAMBI*'s story that gives that story its artistic depth and an emotional resonance that can be strongly felt by children and by adults as well.

Whereas *BAMBI* operates on an epic scale, dealing with an entire forest and its creatures as a world in microcosm, *THE FOX AND THE HOUND* works on a more intimate level, dealing with a comparatively small cast. The latter film only incorporates "epic" elements towards its end, with the introduction of the enormous grizzly bear and the tremendous waterfall, both incarnating the destructive power of nature as the forest fire does in *BAMBI*.

THE FOX AND THE HOUND establishes a clear link to *BAMBI*, however, in its opening sequence. In a startling departure from

the usual way of opening a Disney animated feature (with a jolly, romantic, or sentimental song), *FOX* begins with a dead silence and a blurred screen. A sombre forest setting emerges, and then we see the glittering yet austere beauty of a spider web, which, of course, is an image of a trap. Then, halfway through the credit sequence, the music begins imperceptibly and builds to the abrupt entrance of a fleeing mother fox bearing her offspring (who will be known as Tod, one of the film's protagonists) in her mouth. The mother fox continues her flight throughout the rest of the credit sequence. Once it is over, she lovingly hides her child and then runs off, drawing away the attention of the unseen hunters, only to be shot dead (her body hidden by tall grass) almost immediately thereafter. The eyes of the now-orphaned fox cub are filled with fear. The counterpart to the most shocking sequence in *BAMBI* has in this case occurred at the very beginning of the film. Vincent Canby, film reviewer for *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, wrote that *FOX AND THE HOUND* is a "relentlessly cheery movie." This sequence alone shows that *FOX* is far from that.

Death is a presence throughout this film. The movie's other protagonist, the hound Copper, is raised by a hot-tempered hunter named Amos Slade, usually seen wielding a shotgun, with which he eventually attempts to kill the adult Tod. The film makes a point of Tod's horrified reaction on seeing the animal pelts hanging in Slade's shed; it is the equivalent, after all, of a young boy seeing a pile of human corpses. Copper is trained by Slade to become what the characters explicitly call a "killer," and as an adult, he returns with Slade from a winter of hunting in a car with an enormous pile of pelts—including fox pelts—in the back. At one point Slade's older dog Chief, who serves as an unloveable father figure to Copper, falls from atop some high railroad tracks, and for a moment the film allows us to think him dead. Chief had been pursuing Tod when he fell, and was thereby crippled. Blaming Tod, Slade and Copper hunt the fox and his mate Vixie down in order to kill them both. Slade sets out bear traps, which he demonstrates can easily sever a stick as big as a fox's legs. The film then generates an amazing amount of suspense when the unsuspecting Tod walks amidst these hidden traps. Finally, both Tod and Copper do battle with an immense and ferocious grizzly bear in the film's most remarkable sequence, full of swift activity and rapid cutting, with the bear's size emphasized by the way he fills the screen, and with the emotions of Tod and Copper, ranging from savagery to helpless fear, superbly conveyed. The battle ends with the bear and Tod plunging from a great height into the waterfall, and for a long moment Tod seems to be as dead as the bear apparently is.

There is very little comedy in the film, and what there is seems quite weak. Perhaps this was to be expected, considering that two decades have passed since the Disney animation studio did comedy shorts. In the context of this film, the comedy sub-plot of two birds pursuing a frightened caterpillar takes in an uncomfortable tone in retrospect. The birds are, after all, out to kill their small prey even as Slade and

Copper are out to kill Tod.

Like *BAMBI, THE FOX AND THE HOUND* shows its protagonists growing from babyhood into adulthood. *FOX* is not constructed along *BAMBI*'s specific kind of cyclical pattern, however, so this time, in Copper's case, the film allows us to watch its protagonist's complete transition between these two stages: we see Copper grow bigger and more capable as a hunter over a montage sequence.

Like *BAMBI*, too, *FOX* draws a division between a feminine world, and a masculine one. Tod is a product of the former: after the death of his mother, a benevolent maternal owl arranges for him to be found by a kindly human widow, who then brings him up as a beloved pet, and, obviously, as a substitute for a human child. Copper, on the other hand, is raised by the gruff pair of Slade and Chief, who do not show him the affection he seems to bear for them (or for Chief, anyway). Both Slade and Chief are hunters and they turn Copper into one as well. Indeed, the owl appears to believe that it is Copper's inevitable nature to be a "killer."

Both films are also very much concerned with the inevitable separation of parent and child, and whatever traumatic effects it may bring. Tod loses his real mother to death, and eventually circumstances force his parting from his adoptive "mother," the Widow Tweed. The scene in which she drives him off to a game preserve to leave him there, against her wishes, to lead an independent adult life, is the film's second best. With no dialogue save for a voice-over of the Widow's thoughts, the emotions of both characters come through with both subtle detail and affecting power; we watch Tod's reactions change from joy to bewilderment to melancholy as he slowly realizes what is happening to him. The house-bred fox undergoes a night of discomfort and despair, but later he meets his future mate, Vixie, in a comic encounter reminiscent of Bambi's with Faline. The child-mother relationship is replaced, as it was in *BAMBI*, with a husband-wife relationship. Over the winter that he grew up, Copper supplants the aging Chief as Slade's main hunting dog. Slade certifies the change by allowing Copper to take Chief's former place beside him in the front seat of his car. Copper has a youthful unawareness of how Chief must feel about his change in fortunes. Copper apparently simply accepts the replacing of the old by the young, and of the "father" by the "son," as a fact of life.

However, Copper is infuriated when the Chief is crippled, and determines to kill Tod in revenge. For once in a Disney animated film a character reacts to an injury done to a parental figure not just with sadness but with rage, and indeed, a murderous rage. What makes Copper's fury more shocking is that, as "children," Tod and Copper had become the best of friends.

In as somber and dangerous a world as that of this film, love and friendship carry a special meaning. The Widow's love saves Todd after his mother is forced to abandon him; Vixie's love gives his life new meaning after the Widow in turn has to abandon him. Tod's friendship must have been very important to Copper as a puppy for the simple reason that Copper had no other friends; certainly his "father" figures showed him little affection. The depiction of the friendship between Tod and Copper as "children" is a portrayal of pure, innocent joy that reaches deeply into both characters.

The injury to Chief twists Copper's feelings of friendship for Tod into an enmity that is just as strong. Copper's "killer" nature takes over and distorts the friendship. One does not expect to see a protagonist of a Disney animated feature act in such a manner, but Copper does. In this film the "nightmare element" is not embodied only by enemies, destructive natural forces, or abstractions like death; it lies within one of the heroes as well. The theme of the "dark side" lying within the protagonist is of course familiar in the work of creators of cartoon fantasies that attempt to go beyond ordinary convention, whether it be a story like Kurtzman's "Bug Out" in *TWO-FISTED TALES*, with "Dark" Phoenix, or in a scene in which Frank Miller's Daredevil comes to grip with his urge to kill his foe Bullseye (see my review in *CF #18*).

As in *BAMBI*, a crisis arises that acts as a test of the protagonists. In the course of their vengeful hunt of Tod, Slade and Copper unintentionally arouse a ferocious grizzly bear who turns upon them; it is as if the murderous anger of the hunter and dog have summoned up a monster who embodies that very passion. Tod is fully able to escape while his pursuers are occupied with the attacking bear, but once Copper is injured in the fight, Tod

rushes into the fray and attacks the far bigger and more powerful bruin himself. The furious battle between Tod and the grizzly ends with both combatants plunging down into a waterfall. Seemingly half dead, Tod crawls to shore only to find himself looking up the barrels of Slade's shotgun. At this point comes the film's most powerful image: looking both melancholy and defiant, Copper stands over the helpless Tod, preventing Slade from firing the gun.

Through this trial that fate imposed, both Tod and Copper recognize the true strength and importance of their friendship, which led each to risk his life to save the other. By doing so, each protagonist acknowledged and acted upon his moral responsibility to the other. Moreover, the realization that Tod saved his life despite his attempts to kill the fox leads Copper to overcome his "dark" emotions. Instead, Copper redeems himself by saving Tod's life in turn.

BAMBI closes with a mood of joy (over nature's rebirth and the birth of the two fawns) and of grandeur (over Bambi's rise to Great Princehood). Order has been restored after the chaos of the fire and other real life nightmares. The real life nightmares of *THE FOX AND THE HOUND*—the distortion of the Tod/Copper friendship, Tod's despairing solitude in the woods, and the attack of the demoniacal bear—have also all passed away by the film's ending. The last scene pictures an ordered society whose masculine and feminine sides have been integrated: Slade and the Widow are together, and the Widow—the more benevolent of the two—seems to be dominant. Slade, too, has exorcised his personal demon by giving up his quest for vengeance on Tod at Copper's prompting. The new society is not perfect, because Tod and Vixie cannot be part of it. Yet somehow they do seem part of it as we see them watch the other from afar. Immediately before, a contented Copper recalled his and Tod's childhood vows that their friendship would last forever. The encounter with the grizzly has proved that the friendship will indeed persist despite their geographical separation. This was a theme first introduced in the voice-over to the scene in which the Widow leaves Tod in the forest: even though he and she must now stay apart, their love for each other will endure in their memories.

At the end of the film the comedy subplot is also resolved when the beleaguered caterpillar, who has been pursued all through the story by the hungry birds, turns into a beautiful butterfly, his former fear giving way to radiant joy. The caterpillar's story serves as a thematic parallel to those of Tod and Copper, and indeed to that of Bambi: after passing through times of great hardship, their spirits "rise and advance" to a state in which they find happiness and a touch of transcendence.

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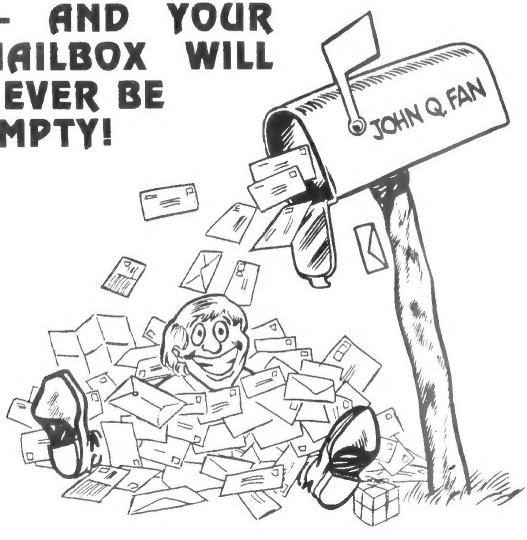

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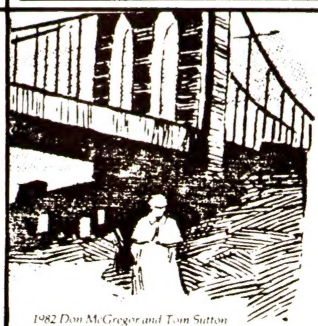

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